

ASSOCIATION DES CLUBS DE CRICKET DU SUD-OUEST

Siège social : Hôtel des Associations - 47160 DAMAZAN



ACCSO AGM 2018 – President’s Report / Bilan Moral

The 2018 season has not been without its problems; but happily not of the disciplinary kind which so preoccupied ACCSO Committee in 2017. The weather conspired against us – with the heat replacing the rain as public enemy n° 1. Three clubs did not participate at all or on a much reduced level; and certain clubs struggled to field full sides even for what turned out to be a much reduced fixture list.

The heatwave gave us the chance to prove that our collective good sense can come before our passion for the game of cricket. I applaud the clubs who decided that player safety is a top priority; and totally support the umpires who drew the line at standing for 6 hours in such weather. I did not hesitate to cite our “citoyenneté” to France Cricket and I’m pleased to say that our collective attitude was also very well received at the regional levels (Bordeaux and Montpellier) of our parent Federation.

As I write this report two clubs have been thinking of getting together to field a joint XI next season; with another club wondering whether they might have enough licenced members to field two sides. As ever, your Committee is ready to do everything possible to ensure that our clubs survive the peaks and troughs of membership, including lobbying at the Federation and at France Cricket.

There’s likely to be no shortage of possibilities for new opponents in the near/mid-term future, starting with a newly-affiliated club up near La Rochelle, whose president has ambitions to acquire enough adults to join in our competitions but wants to see the club anchored locally before making commitments. Negotiations with a view to forming a new club in Périgueux have come to a halt (hopefully not permanently). I have been advising a non-cricketing “civilian” at Bergerac who has raised the possibility of a club for Afghan refugees there. And there’s an enterprising young cricketer who is looking at the possibility of forming a club in the Tarn.

None of these initiatives is likely to result in competitive sides before 2020, so AGM will debate whether to draw a line under the experiment of a single pool in the Blevins Franks League. As ever, whether or not that happens will be a decision to be made by the clubs rather than by Committee. And the clubs will also be invited to decide whether to re-instate the Cup competition. Given a shortage of available players here and the lack of “wheels” for certain players there, it may seem rather strange that we might be adding fixtures to the calendar – especially since not so very long ago there was a strong sentiment in favour of more space in the fixture list for friendly matches (still the principal revenue source for most clubs). Just one of the challenges of organizing a calendar to suit the clubs rather than the organisers (as sometimes appears to be the case up at France Cricket).

Talking of France Cricket.... There are positive signs that FC are beginning to understand that developing nationwide competitions can only happen if serious attention is paid to the question of financing “away” matches on a national scale.

I have for a long time praised the ACCSO clubs for their willingness to travel long distances – never more true than in the past 2 years! – for a good game in a convivial atmosphere. But travel outside of our region involves overnight stays, meals, perhaps even time off from work.

The new news is that the Coupe de France may just, in 2019, live up to its name and become more attractive to regional pools such as ours. Hopefully FC will reach decisions on financing and tournament structure in time for us to debate at our AGM on 10th November.

I make no apologies for writing a little more than usual about France Cricket because I want to put on record that our independence of action has just received two welcome boosts.

The first of these comes from having persuaded FC to prolong the agreement whereby FC formally delegates to ACCSO Committee the authority to approve member-clubs' fixtures against non-affiliated clubs, whether French or touring sides.

Apart from the fact that ACCSO's secretary-general will give a more rapid and sympathetic service than if you had to submit your fixture lists to FC, what does this mean to a club? Quite simply it means that the FFBS insurance cover is automatically extended to all such matches – and club presidents are surely aware that, under French law, an un-insured match is in fact illegal.

The second boost also comes from an extension to an existing agreement which gives ACCSO the authority to organize competitions. This right is normally reserved, by ministerial decree, to the national body.

At FC, the recent trend is to take a much stronger line about who can organize competitions and under what playing conditions and disciplinary code.

Normally FC will delegate only to a regional Ligue of the FFBS; and this is how the new Ligue Hauts-de-France (Lille, Calais, Saint Omer, etc.) is organized.

But this clearly does not work here in ACCSO. Not only do we span two such Ligues (Nouvelle Aquitaine-Bordeaux and Occitanie-Montpellier) but those Ligues have no interest in running our competitions and anyway they freely acknowledge that ACCSO has been doing the job perfectly well for many years.

Since this time last year, FC have turned their backs on the MCC Laws and now insist upon following ICC Playing Conditions (T20 and ODI). And they have developed a radically different disciplinary procedure and code of conduct from what went before, with monetary fines involved for many offences. And the participating clubs have no say in the matter.

The FC-ACCSO agreement now in place lets us escape from all of this!

It means that we can continue

- to work in English (until such time as Philippe persuades enough other presidents to switch to French!);
- to base our tournament regulations on the MCC Laws;
- to introduce local variations (bouncers, wides, etc.);
- to train our own umpires according to our own "syllabus" based solely on the Laws;
- to manage our own disciplinary affairs, including our own code of conduct.

And ACCSO member-clubs will continue to be able to decide, at AGM, how our matches are organized.

I'm sure that clubs will appreciate that this is a much more appropriate way to organize our cricket!

This time last year you elected Ian Brown and Malcolm Grant and there's no doubt that they have both fully justified your confidence. I thank them for their hard work in making a success of the 2018 season and for their support throughout the past 12 months. As ever, Stephen Harrison has not only expertly managed our finances but has always brought his long experience of cricket management to all our debates and decision-making. Electing a replacement for Stephen this time next year will be a challenge!

I fully endorse yet again what Stephen says about the importance of the generous sponsorship we continue to receive from Blevins Franks and I hope that clubs will continue to take every opportunity to promote Blevins Franks services in and around the clubs. It is this sponsorship, together with the fact that our umpires generously fund so much of their own expenses, which enables tournament fees to be so low (compare what you pay with the 300 euros entry fee to the FC Coupe de France!).

I am willing to stand for re-election for another period of 2 years; but it would most certainly be my last. AGM 2020 would then be the time to identify new ACCSO representatives in time for the start of new mandates at FC and the FFBS regions. Their first job would be to persuade FC to renew the formal delegations which allow ACCSO to operate a playing environment tailored to how we want to play cricket.

Peter Townsend
ACCSO President
19th October 2018.