

Secretary's report on the 2020 season

COVID-19

The 2020 season will go down in the books as a special one. The world was shaken and unpleasantly surprised by the nasty Corona virus that causes the disease COVID-19. Almost a year later, the virus is still present and has spread all over the world. As a result, at the start of the season, cricket was limited and only training sessions and inter-match sessions were allowed, with a closed clubhouse. Although far from ideal, the mood among the players was very good and they were happy to play cricket anyway. From 1 July, it was also possible to play in leagues and complete half a league. However, without promotion or relegation.

Board

In 2020, the Board again consisted of Wim Pielage (Chairman), Ernst-Pieter Knüpfer (Secretary and Vice-Chairman), Chris Knoll (Treasurer), Richard Wolfe (Commissioner Youth) and Stephan Hannema (Commissioner Bar and Events).

No foreign pros

We initially wanted Brady Barends to come back as our 'overseas professional'. However, because of the Coronavirus this was impossible, the borders were closed. Most clubs in the Topklasse had to cancel their foreign professionals, which in some ways made the competition more attractive. More opportunities were given to youth. As for ACC, this was only partly true because of the influx of players from outside and the increasing number of expats that have settled in Amsterdam and its surroundings.

Our new head coach: Taku Kusano

After the inevitable departure of Saqib, Sikander and Rehmat Zulfiqar, the decision was made to recruit Taku Kusano as non-playing head coach. Taku was no stranger to us. With a Dutch girlfriend in Amsterdam, whom he has since married, he had been staying in the Netherlands for a few months for several years, helping out with the coaching of our youth and first team sides. His drive for cricket coaching is inexhaustible and that has led him to obtain his level 3 coaching certificate with the help of a number of ACC players. After that he gained experience at a number of leading cricket academies in South Africa and India. And now head coach of ACC and also employed by the Amsterdam Cricket Academy.

Cricket experience at ACC

Taku's experience of coaching cricket soon spread to the youth and players of the squad, resulting in a large turnout and long stays at the club after training and matches. A healthy and refreshing development. But it was not just that. The previously imposed restrictions, caused by COVID-19, greatly increased the urge for cricket and meeting friends at ACC. All teams played their games of cricket in April, May and June with great pleasure, ending with a short (or sometimes longer) stay on the terrace in front of the club house, with a self-brought can of beer or soft drink.

Half competition - club house open again

In July, the game was finally played for real. No promotion or relegation, but that did not matter. The club house was open again and our tenants José and Jade took care of the inner man as usual. Of course, social distancing was taken into account as much as possible, hands were frequently disinfected, etc.

Seniors performance

- ACC 1

The first team played 8 games and finished in 7th place, with an equal number of points as HBS. With Anis Raza as new captain, Mark Mulready as head of technical affairs and the already mentioned head coach Taku Kusano, the team played in a varied line-up, not without merit. Some of the games could perhaps have been turned into wins, but then it became apparent that we still lacked some experience. It was certainly good to see a number of young players perform. As a batsman, the modest but fanatical Shreyas Potdar stood out. It was a sight to see him batting against Voorburg away, where he scored his first Top Class fifty (62). The same was true of the 'grown-up' Aryan Kumar with a sublime 51 against strong Punjab. With the ball, we have in Mees van Vliet a young and very talented opening bowler. We hope to enjoy them all in the future.

They were not the only ones to score. Our strongest game was against the weakened Dosti at home. We were treated to a batting display by our treasurer Chris Knoll (107) and newcomer Charles McInerney (80). They combined for 186 runs on the third wicket and laid the foundations for our monster score of 291 for 7.

Besides Charles McInerney, who came from Morton, England, the first team had some new faces. They were the cheerful Cameron Burnett, opening bat/wicket keeper from New Zealand and working in the Netherlands, Sahil Kothari, left-arm spinner, student from India and tipped by our former member Nicky Hekster and our Indian friends from Eindhoven, who stayed on after completing their technical education at the TU in Eindhoven. The latter trio used to play for Tegenbosch and later for Excelsior (Kiran Hosur) and Bloemendaal (Ram Ramesh Babu and Anthony Alangara Napoleon). All very friendly guys who could get their first experience in the Topklasse through ACC.

- The T20 competition

In the T20 competition, we got no further than the quarter finals this season, where we were slaughtered without a chance by the South African Spartan Lenert van Wijk (118), who really took our bowlers by storm. In the pool phase we did win against big leaguers Groen en Wit and Kampong, but lost to VRA.

- ACC 2

The second team, without Bas van der Heyde, narrowly lost its first game to the later leader, VRA. The other 5 games were won in a row. Fine centuries from Bas van der Heyde (100 not out against HBS), Kiran Hosur (111 not out against Rood en Wit) and fine batting from skipper Stephan Hannema, who made a few good runs. All in all, a nice season, even if it was a bit short.

- ACC 3

Captain Mudi Allah Rakkah's third team won 6 of its 8 games to finish top of the league table. It is unfortunate that because of COVID-19 there is no promotion, so they will have to try again next year to promote to the Second Division. Brothers Gurlab and Baljot Singh combined for around 500 runs. Mani Tamilselvan (12) and Nagesh Danturti (11) captured most of the wickets.

- ACC Zomi

The Zomi finished 2 points behind leaders Qui Vive and Hermes DVS, together with Excelsior'20, in what was an exciting competition. Various contributions from a number of players, most notably the 93 runs (8x6) by a stray South African Morné Pepler against Gelre. Had he played more than just 2 games, this would undoubtedly have earned the team first place.

- ACC Zami

The Zami are back. Though no longer under the captaincy of champions maker Rein Akkerman, they are now under the inspiring leadership of Umer Muhammed. With 14 points from 8 games, Umer's friendly team, supplemented by what is left of the veterans, finished in first place. El capitano was also the main rungetter with 269 runs. Zuhaib Rashed was the most successful with 14 wickets, followed by brothers Umer and Abubakar Muhammad with 11 wickets each.

Our youth

The youth is managed with plenty of energy by Richard Wolfe and was trained by our head coach Taku Kusano and his many assistants. ACC was represented in all age categories, with the O15 and O17 combining with VRA. They were also trained by former international Peter Borren.

The O15 reached a respectable second place, behind Kampong who lost twice. The O17 finished first in their group and easily beat Bloemendaal in the semi-finals, before facing archrival VCC in the final. In a blistering match, VCC was beaten in the last over (185-181). More or less equal contributions from the ACC/VRA combination, with Shreyas Potdar, Mees van Vliet and Zinesh Master performing well.

- Lockdown tour

No tour to England this season. This was replaced by the 'Lockdown tour', which was led by the Amsterdam Cricket Academy. A three-day cricket spectacle with overnight stays in tents on our sports complex.

Despite the restrictions due to COVID-19, our youth has been able to play plenty of cricket, including the Tip & Run. Also in the winter months they are offered the possibility and the attendance is overwhelming. A big compliment to all those who work hard and make this possible.

Amsterdam Cricket Academy (ACA)

The ACA is an initiative of Robert Wolfe and Taku Kusano and aims to cultivate and develop cricket in the Netherlands. The aim is to ensure that there is a grassroots system that grows the game from the ground up and gives children a taste of cricket from an early age. To support this we will work together with other academies, regional clubs and the KNCB to set up coaching structures and pathways.

ACC will help the new academy by making its facilities available for coaching youngsters in the start-up phase. With Taku Kusano as head coach and ex-internationals Peter Booren and Tim de Leede as guest coaches, cricket clinics are organised on a regular basis.

Activities at ACC

Because of COVID-19 many touring teams from England had to cancel their planned tour to the Netherlands, including our friends from Eastcote who are keen to recapture the Lou Woudstra Cup.

Early September the Boys & Girlsday was held. This annual event is a big highlight for the youngest youth.

The Fairly Odd Tournament and the Mancunian Cup inter-tournament were fortunately able to take place and were again a great success. These events bring a super atmosphere to ACC, as does the ACC Fifty not out, which did not take place this time. At the end of September the three-day match against VRA was played. This spectacle always goes on, no matter the weather conditions. The game ended in a draw, with ACC first batting 141 all out, followed by VRA with 191 all out. ACC then 236 for 9 with Baljot Singh 114 not out and VRA in reply 182 for 7. A successful end to an exceptional season.

The friends of ACC Club of 100

A nice initiative of Rick Thorburn who, together with Jan-Willem Beuker (chairman) and Michael van Os, forms the board of the Club of 100 which was founded on 3 March 2020. The first proof is the purchase of two picnic tables, the sponsoring of the famous Boys & Girlsday and the purchase of two ACC flags. ACC is very grateful to the initiator(s) and members of the Club of 100 and hopes the Club will be able to recruit more members in the lustrum year.

The Actie geef een bal

Besides the Club of 100, also the Actie Bal yielded the necessary money for ACC. A welcome support for which we are very grateful to the generous donators.

Website

The unsurpassed website is an important source of information for all ACC players and followers. Kudos to all scribes and our website master Michael van Os for their efforts to keep us all informed of the matches and other ACC cricket news. Michael van Os. We thank them for their efforts. Also a word of thanks to our loyal scribes.

Farewell

Unfortunately in 2020 we had to say goodbye to a number of loved ones. In September Jackie Thorburn (69) passed away, in October our highly appreciated Fifty not out member Ferry Dukker (88) and in December Louise Jansen (86). May they rest in peace.

Lustrum ACC 100 years

On 5 March 2021 it will be exactly 100 years ago that ACC was founded. We would like to celebrate the 100-year anniversary with our members during the season and have come up with some nice activities to do so. If and how the lustrum will take shape is however still uncertain. The Coronavirus has the whole world in its grip and limits our freedom of movement. Hospitality, museums, theatres and gyms are closed, football and hockey competitions have stopped and holidays abroad are virtually impossible. How long this lockdown will last is unknown and with it, the start of the cricket competition for 2021 is also an uncertain factor. We remain courageous and positive. The preparations for the new season and our anniversary are in full swing.

On behalf of the ACC board, I wish you all good health and a successful cricket season. Take care of each other and stay safe.

Ernst-Pieter Knüpfer

Amsterdam,
February 2021