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COME ON, YOU PIES!

EXCLUSIVE:
'Umble Ovenden
takes top accolade

By **HAMISH McDOUGALL**
Diplomatic Correspondent

PIERS 'Pies' Ovenden has been named Fleet Street Strollers Player of the Year for 2012.

He was awarded the coveted Max Brodbeck Trophy at the club's annual dinner this evening, for accumulating an impressive 35 wickets, 551 runs and two food-related nicknames in 29 appearances over the course of the season, the most by any player.

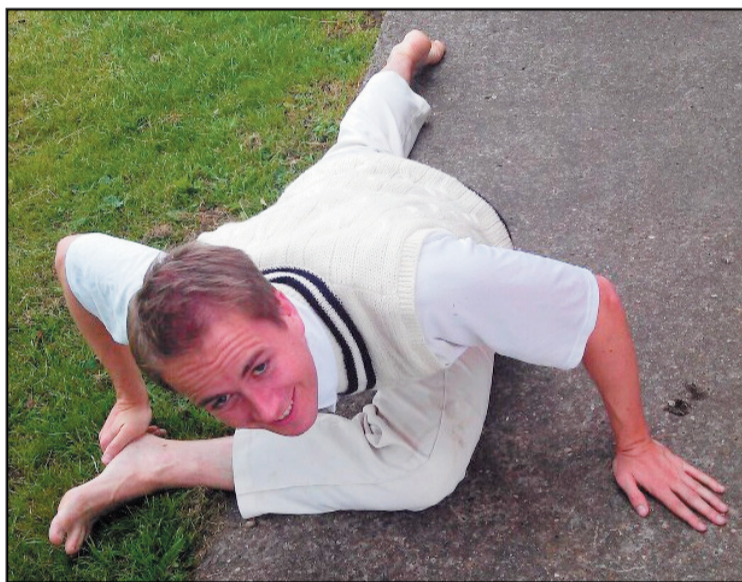
Chairman Kimball Bailey was quick to endorse the trophy winner. "Piers had the fastest email response rate of anyone last year," he said. "He read my book and laughed at my jokes. It's a no-brainer."

However, the news was greeted with dismay in the City, where, off the pitch, Ovenden's hard-nosed approach to reining in banking hubris has earned him the nickname 'The Regulator'.

A well-placed City source said: "Everyone talks about his great hundred in CERN but it is the hundreds of regulations in Basel III that we should be concerned about."

The row has become political after the Liberal Democrats' spokesman for Beeston defended the decision, saying: "We had no choice but to give the award to Piers after the mess the previous Labour government left the country in."

"He has managed to put the wheel back on the



Bend it like Ovenden: Piers caught loosening up for another intriguing spell

PLAYER OF THE YEAR

wheelbarrow. They have even been chanting his name down at Meadow Lane: You Pies!"

'Modesty' Pies clearly has admirers. One WAG said: "He's very handsome and looks a lot younger than he actually is. His appearance is deceptive, much like his medium-pace floaty outswingers."

Veteran fixture secretary Simon Brodbeck was among those to pay tribute, saying: "Piers personifies the Strollers spirit and he batted like a God at Stanton by Dale, so he's fine by me."

Treasurer Tom Wood, however, was more equivocal: "I thought his name was Kelvin."

In an unprecedented move, Edward Gallagher declined to comment, although he is believed to be seeking legal advice after deeming his own dinner table entertainment more than enough to secure the trophy.

Ovenden himself was quietly contented. "It has been a challenging season," he confessed. "I have been called Pies, Pears Unknown and worse – and people are always putting the emphasis on the wrong syllable in my name."

"So to come through that and win the Player of the Year is terrific. It is a humbling experience."

Warren shows how to cut the perfect father figure

By **PIERS OVENDEN**
Antipodean Specialist

IT WAS a big year for Warren Crocker. In the season opener at Great Missenden he took six for 30. In May at Jordans Taverners he scored his 1,000th run for the club. In July he clobbered 54 not out at Old Wimbledonians. And in September he played his 100th Strollers match at Farnham Royal.

But his proudest moment – even surpassing being the son of Dal Crocker, our Golf Day champion – was becoming a father himself for the first time when on August 18 Theresa gave birth to Lachlan Anthony Crocker. Simon Brodbeck was overjoyed for the couple: "I got to take six for 16 at Byfleet while Crocker was at the hospital!"

Little wonder then that Warren ran away with the Chairman's Award as Stroller of the Year. And having taken 28 wickets at 8.61 runs per wicket in only 13 matches, he was also named Bowler of the Year – for the third time in four years.



Proud dad: Wozza performer!

STROLLER/BOWLER OF THE YEAR

Of course the statistics – and the baubles that would clutter his mantelpiece if only he didn't live in a

tiny air-conditioned apartment in Aldgate – don't tell the full story. At West Chilmington, with the Strollers defending a modest total, Crocker bowled with fearsome pace. Against the Beamers his batting was a vital safety net, saving the blushes of the top order. He also made outrageous circus catches look ordinary. And his reliable green Vauxhall did many a mile around the M25, charitably transporting utterly useless Kiwis to their weekend doom.

Another measure of the Crocker factor was his psychological impact on Strollers captains. His name on the team sheet was guaranteed to give the skipper a jaunty bounce in his step – until he began ripping the heart out of the opposition's batting and had to be hauled off to make a game of it. His analyses of 5.3-0-6-4 at Jordans and 4.1-0-8-3 versus The Times both came in two spells, one making inroads at the start, the other polishing things off.

Warren's whole 2012 season began and ended in much the same way: in devastating all-round form.

Jono well groomed to see off pretenders to his throne

By **SAM BRODBECK**
Youth Policy Editor

MIDSEASON and everything was going exactly to plan. Caroline had agreed to marry Jono Addis at the peak of summer – in response to the request from a consortium of batsmen.

Surely the months of planning would leave the grinning Kiwi exhausted, merely a helpless observer as another Stroller scooped the Batsman of the Year award?

But Addis rose to the challenge in the same majestic manner that he plucked catches out of the covers. His hat trick of batting awards was sealed with 624 technically flawless runs, including five fifties and a hundred, at an average of 57.

One Strollers fanatic, who gave his name simply as 'Stair', was left on the verge of tears after hearing the news of Addis's triumph. He explained that he had not seen such a straight bat



Addis attack: Jono hits out

BATSMAN OF THE YEAR

and energetic running between the wickets since his grandfather had taken him to see the

legendary James Timperley many years previously.

Amazingly, the Addis accolade was achieved without his customary double hundred at Pinkneys Green. His measly 20 not out that day was not merely a tragedy for stats guru Maggie Patston but also put several local bookmakers out of work.

Despite his heroics with the bat, Addis said his personal highlight was running out fellow Stroller Brian Taylor on the Three Counties tour. "He was playing for a club called Stanton by Dale or something," said Addis. "I couldn't stand the betrayal so the only answer was to knock his stumps over. The dirty look he gave me was a bonus."

As *The Stroller* went to press reports were emerging that Addis was soon to follow Warren Crocker into fatherhood. Rumours that Caroline's pregnancy was being seen by jealous Strollers as an opportunity to wrestle the Batsman of the Year award from his hands could not be confirmed.

PLAYERS' PLAYER

Anyone for LeJog? Jim'll fix it

THEY never thought he could do it: a legend on the cricket field and popular hero, body now creaking, but presented with an intriguing offer of renewal in a different sport. With it came the promise of great physical pain and effort, and the risk of crushing failure.

And so Andrew Flintoff duly flogged himself off to grotesque reality TV as he lumbered around in a dubious imitation of a boxing match. By contrast, there was no showbiz fakery in Jim Hodgson's achievements in 2012. Few can appreciate the hard work and sheer mental strength that went into staying up all night on the Three Counties tour before going out and taking seven wickets the next day.

Oh yes, and he also went on a bike ride. For all his success on the field (35 wickets at 14.03, 268 runs at 24.4, spectacularness of catching still under debate), the *pièce de résistance* of Hodgson's season was LeJog. After agreeing to the trip in the comfort of a warm pub, some would have balked at the 920 miles



Plucky Jim: handy with the bat

and many, many hills. Not Hodgson, even though the official tour blog still suggested he "cut the figure of a portly Frenchman who set off on a Sunday morning ride and went a bit further than he expected".

All that remains is for Bradley Wiggins to appear for the Strollers under the new cycling-cricket exchange programme, and we look forward to Jim's next challenge: making the Olympic boxing team in Rio 2016. Meanwhile, he remains a worthy winner of the Reg Cooper Award as Players' Player 2012.

Laurie Allsopp

DUCK OF THE YEAR

Not to be dismissed lightly...

DUCK of the Year goes to a man who not only did not get a duck, but did not lose his wicket in his five innings.

This mysterious award goes to Ivor Fiala for a career with the Strollers that began on September 17, 1978. He came out all guns blazing with a free-scoring 35, but sadly in 320-odd innings since has failed to raise that best-score bar.

At Hurley in 2012, however, he did pass another awe-inspiring milestone – that of 100 not-out innings for the club.

More importantly, Ivor has done every job that keeps this club going



Fiala: long-distance operator

– including captain and treasurer – and has been collecting tea money, reciting odes, packing the bag, taking catches at gully and doing the scoring for ever.

Simon Brodbeck