

INVESTMENT IN YOUTH FUELS PROMOTION BID

James Ayles visits a club which is fusing ambition with pedigree as they bid to get back to the top in Premier League cricket

Bournemouth CC are a club on a mission this year – aiming to regain their place at the top table.

After an internal dispute in 2012 led to 14 first-team players leaving the club over the following two seasons, Bournemouth next found themselves relegated from the Premier Division of the Southern Premier League in 2013.

But vice-chairman Jon Clutterbuck believes the side are finally looking up again for the Division 1 side, as they gun for promotion back to the top tier.

He said: "We have tried to stabilise things for a year or two and now we're on an upward curve with a very young side. We came third last year and lost to the bottom two sides, otherwise we'd have gone up, which was frustrating.

"Last year we certainly threatened promotion, and we've picked up some top-quality players for next season, so we are very ambitious.

"We have good facilities and pitches, the grounds are good, the club is very well-run."

Clutterbuck singled out the success the club has had in bringing younger players through in recent years, thanks to renewed focus and structure.

"Our youth set-up over the last few years has grown by 20 per cent whereas a lot of the other clubs are contracting," said Clutterbuck.

"We are in a bit of a quandary actually, as the only club in Dorset who play in an ECB Premier League – we could go out and get all the best youngsters available to us but that would be devastating to Dorset cricket.

"And for a youth section you want strong competition, we think all the best young players will play Southern League cricket eventually, and you don't want to attract too many to the detriment of other sides. It's a balancing act."

Clutterbuck has identified the club's new academy programme and extensive community schemes as fundamental to their progress.

He said: "We started an academy system for our best youngsters a few years ago and that has really kicked on, that brings players in.

"We want to become a bit of a cricket hub in Dorset, we are going to run at two age groups and we have been given central funding to run it.

"We have the infrastructure here to handle large numbers whereas some clubs don't. We are just generally very proactive now in moving things forward on and off the pitch."

And Clutterbuck is confident the club, who were National Club T20 champions in 2009, can make a big statement this season in Southern Premier Division One.

He said: "We just want it to be a nice



**Impressive set-up:
and all are welcome
at Bournemouth CC**
PICTURE: Getty Images

place to play. If we get back up to the Premier Division, we will stay there, there is no point going up before you are ready.

"The second XI didn't have the best year but they certainly should be vying for promotion.

"The third XI lost only two games last season but didn't go up because the top two lost only once each, to each other. It is not normal that you lose only two games and don't go up!"

The commitment to providing a pathway for young players, including girls, in the county is demonstrated by having a number of 12-and-13-year-olds in the adult fourth and fifth XIs. Clutterbuck explained: "The fourth XI and fifth XI are more development teams, they play to allow the young players in.

"We have had a number of 12-year-olds playing in the fifth XI, which is always encouraging.

"Because they are young county players, they are allowed, and they improved tremendously doing it."

Over the years Bournemouth have featured a number of players who would go on to achieve highly in the game, including Middlesex head coach

**Senior status:
Chris Park**

Richard Scott and former England internationals Dimitri Mascarenhas and Andy Lloyd.

Australian Test cricketer Adam Voges and South African wicketkeeper Chris Cooke, who turned out for Glamorgan last summer, have also both appeared for the club as overseas players.

Clutterbuck also highlighted the impact of two returning brothers, Dorset CCC pair Chris and Nick Park, in leading the way for younger players at the club.

He added: "There's a history of big players at Bournemouth.

"The Park brothers are the older players now, so it helps seeing what those guys have achieved and having them around as inspiration.

"We are producing some good cricketers, and we are trying to make ourselves part of the pathway if you want to play for Dorset in Minor Counties.

"If you are a club lad in Dorset this is somewhere you'll be welcome to come and play."





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