

JOHN BLAIR - MR INVERCLYDE

Written by Iain Gibson

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It is with great sadness that Inverclyde Cricket Club has learned of the passing of John Blair.

John was a true stalwart of the club, having been a member for over 60 years, joining Scotts Cricket Club in 1957 when it competed in the thriving Greenock & District Cricket league. He was a player of some note, opening both the batting and bowling for the club for a number of years, and was a long standing committee member, filling a number of positions including President. He was Honorary Life President of the club and was still actively involved as its Child Protection Officer and a much respected junior coach. Over the years he was instrumental in persuading and cajoling many to play the game when times were hard for the sport locally, particularly in the 70s and 80s with the demise of most of the local clubs. On the demise of the local Greenock & District Cricket League John had the foresight to persuade the club to join the larger Glasgow & District League in 1977, now part of the Western District Cricket Union. Then, with the disappearance of the local shipyards John was part of the move to widen the club's appeal by changing its name from Scotts' CC to Inverclyde CC. Both these initiatives ensured the long term survival of the club from both a competitive and financial point of view.

On his retirement from playing John turned to coaching. His focus on the future of the club never wavered, obtaining his coaching certificates and being junior convenor from 1990 till 2015, often ploughing a lone furrow, but succeeding during that time in creating U-11, U-13 and U-15 teams. His overriding interest was always the development of young talent and encouragement of newcomers to the sport, being only too willing to share his extensive knowledge and experience. John was a committee member of the Western District Junior Cricket Union for over 15 years, including a year as its Chairman. His coaching abilities and enthusiasm were more widely recognised when he was asked to become Western District junior team manager, a position he held for six years, during which time the team won the Scottish inter-district tournament. Following this John managed the Western Academy team for four years and helped them to win the Scottish inter-academy trophy in 2010. During this time he also helped to organise and run residential coaching camps in Edinburgh involving potential Scottish youth players, not to mention a three year stint as the Scottish Universities cricket team manager, helping them to win the European universities indoor six a side tournament in

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2012.

John was indeed "Mr Inverclyde" and without him there would be no Inverclyde Cricket Club today. He was a good friend, team mate, coach and wise counsellor to many, always ready with his unique form of encouragement and typical John humour. His input to the club and youth cricket in general over the years has been incalculable and his enduring legacy is the continued survival of the club and its emphasis on junior cricket.

John will be greatly missed by all at Inverclyde Cricket Club and further afield, but above all he was a family man. Our thoughts go out to his wife Ann and his children, Stewart, Fiona and David at this sad time.