

Clitheroe Royal Grammar School

Our Students are MCCF Cricket National Champions

Following a 2-day trial in June this year, three Clitheroe Royal Grammar School students, Harley Harrison, Harry Anderton and Arran Dignan were selected to represent the Manchester hub of the MCCF (Marylebone Cricket Club Foundation, Lords) in the national hub T20 tournament.

The Manchester Hub is managed and coached by the Lancashire County cricket organisation. The three CRGS students were selected for the trial based on their inclusion in the Lancashire County Interleague cricket squad.

The MCCF national hub tournament involved 75 hubs from across England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales, organised into five regional groups. The Manchester hub was in the Wales and Northwest of England group. The path to the final was steep, with only two group matches, the regional final, the semi-finals and then the final at Lords on the main ground.

The Manchester hub had a bye in the first round so their first match was in the second round against Wrexham at Connah's Quay CC in North Wales. Manchester batted first and put on a huge T20 total of 183/3, Arran Dignan contributing with 17. Wrexham only managed 96/7 in reply, with Harry Anderton taking 2 wickets for just 5 runs, so Manchester progressed convincingly to the regional final.

Based on his performances for the MCCF up to this point, Harley Harrison was selected, from all the hub teams in the region, to represent the Northwest England and Wales region in a one-off timed (full day) match versus the senior MCC Lords team at Colwyn Bay Cricket Club, North Wales, in July. The game was of a very high standard, Harley kept wicket and scored the second highest runs of his team's innings. Unfortunately, the junior representative side narrowly lost to the senior side but gave an excellent account of themselves.

Manchester were up against Liverpool in the regional final, the match being played at Earlestown CC in Newton-Le-Willows, Merseyside. Manchester batted first and put in another superb performance, finishing on 167/2. In reply, Liverpool managed only 92-all out, Harry Anderton again taking 2 wickets. This convincing win put Manchester (now representing Lancashire and NW England and Wales) through to the regional finals day at Harrow School, London. There was a total of five hub teams in the semi-final event:

Manchester (Lancashire)
Sheffield (Yorkshire)
Slough (Berkshire)
Cotswolds
Nottingham (Nottinghamshire)

Unfortunately, after travelling all the way to Harrow, London, the semi-finals day was ultimately called off due to heavy rain in the morning. The day was rearranged and held at Worksop College, Nottinghamshire. Manchester won both their matches on the day (Nottingham and Cotswolds) to progress unbeaten to the final at Lords, Harry Anderton taking 3 wickets across the two games and Harley Harrison taking two catches and a stumping and 5 not-out with the bat. Their opponents in the final would be Slough, Berkshire.

The final at Lords on 20th September 2021

The final at Lords (the home of cricket) was played on the main ground in the stadium. The game was live streamed by the Lords filming crew and commentary was from the BBC cricket commentary team. Friends and family of the players were given full and exclusive access to the main pavilion, a privilege normally only experienced by members of the MCC.

Membership costs £35,000 and there is a 29-year waiting list! The players themselves also had access to the players changing rooms, the players dining room, and walked on and off the pitch through the famous 'Long Room' of Lords.

After warming up on the Nursery ground, the Manchester captain lost the toss and the Berkshire side elected to bat. Harry Anderton opened the bowling with a good spell. Harley Harrison was keeping wicket as usual, taking a catch behind the stumps during the Slough innings. The Manchester team bowled and fielded well to restrict the Slough team to 102/7; 103 the target. Confidence was high with the Manchester team, although it proved much more difficult than expected. The Slough team bowled and fielded extremely well, and after a great start in the first over, the Manchester openers found it increasingly difficult to score. The run rate required was increasing over by over and then wickets began to fall. Harley Harrison came in at number 6 in the 10th over, with the score at only 37/4 and the chase proving difficult. Harley batted through the rest of the innings, keeping the run rate just in touch against excellent bowling. The last over arrived (Harley on strike with the score at 89/7), with Manchester requiring 14 to win; a huge ask at this stage of the game. Harley and his batting partner took it to the very last ball, requiring 3 to win from the last ball of the match. The last ball was bowled wide outside the leg stump and was missed by the batsman and the keeper, Harley and his partner ran furiously between the stumps as the ball raced away to the boundary...the Slough fielders couldn't quite reach the ball and it hit the boundary rope. The Manchester team had won the match on the last ball. The three CRGS boys and their team walked off the pitch and up the steps into the famous Lords Long Room as national champions!

The trophy presentation was conducted by two ex-England captains, Mike Gatting and Mike Brearley and the medals were presented by ex-Indian international, Rohan Gavaskar.