

PRESS RELEASE DATED 30TH OCTOBER 2008

Southland Cricket wants to go into bat with the ILT in a bold chase to stage a minor international cricket game in Invercargill.

That's the word from Southland Cricket Association chairman, Murray Fitzgibbon, following confirmation that the Invercargill Licensing Trust and the ILT Foundation had committed a further \$55,000 funding towards the association's running costs.

The funding would also allow Southland Cricket to retain the all-round and ever-important skills of Kevin Cooper, who is the association's director of coaching and head groundsman.

Fitzgibbon said the latest funding announcement was more significant than it seemed because it was only last year that the ILT and ILT Foundation backed the Queens Park redevelopment project to the tune of \$1.2 million.

The Queens Park upgrade involved the laying of a new wicket block, the revamping and refurbishing of the pavilion and a major extension and upgrade to the indoor training centre.

Now Southland Cricket wants to develop and lift its already swish Queens Park headquarters to an even higher standard to stage an historic first match involving the New Zealand A team.

Fitzgibbon said ongoing ILT and ILT Foundation support made that a realistic aim in the next season or two, especially after Southland Cricket came "very close" to staging a New Zealand A match against England A this coming summer.

"We've never hosted a minor international game like that before," Fitzgibbon said.

"But we just about got approval to host a New Zealand and England A match this season.

"There's a few more things to work on and improve, like sightscreens and some drainage, but once we get that sorted I think we'll be ready to stage an A match maybe in two seasons."

Fitzgibbon said the high-class facility at Queens Park was already the envy of many throughout the country because "they can't believe a minor cricket association has something like this".

That facility would soon include a state-of-the-art electronic scoreboard, again thanks predominantly to the ILT.

The scoreboard would be installed at the northern end of the ground and should be ready for Otago's four-day State Championship game against Canterbury, starting on November 24.

ILT president, Alan Dennis, said the Trust was pleased to support Southland Cricket because it continued to flourish and aim high.

"We're thrilled to help the Southland Cricket Association work towards hosting the New Zealand A team against a touring side in the next year or two," he said.

"That would be a fantastic achievement for cricket and for Southland sport in general."

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