

SOUTHLAND CRICKET PRESS RELEASE DATED 11TH DECEMBER 2008

THE skilled work of former English professional Kevin Cooper can be seen all over Southland cricket and it will continue for at least another 12 months, much to the relief of local officials.

Cooper is the Southland Cricket Association's director of coaching, the head Queens Park groundsman and he is also the acting joint chief executive officer.

He was also the Southland Hawke Cup coach until last season before the SCA rightly re-advertised the role after realising it was asking Cooper to take on too many positions, which wasn't fair on him or making the best use of his ability.

Southland Cricket Association chairman, Murray Fitzgibbon, said Cooper had signed on for his fourth year, starting from the end of this month, and his retention was only confirmed thanks mainly to \$55,000 joint funding from the Invercargill Licensing Trust and the ILT Foundation.

Fitzgibbon said retaining Cooper was probably the SCA's most important announcement this season.

"With the experience and ability he has, he could easily get a job in Christchurch, Wellington or Auckland," Fitzgibbon said. "He's that good and that respected. But he loves it here and has decided to stay here. We're very pleased about that and we're very pleased the Trust has been able to help out in that regard."

ILT president, Alan Dennis, said part of his organisation's sports development focus was attracting and retaining the best coaches, and Cooper fits into that category.

"He's outstanding at what he does and his efforts, in just three years, have already made a significant difference for Southland cricket."

Cooper's junior coaching and player identification ability has had the biggest impact in Southland since moving here from England where he enjoyed a successful county career as a medium pace bowler for Nottinghamshire.

"It's just the knowledge and cricketing expertise that he has and that he can pass on to the younger generation coming through. It's invaluable," Fitzgibbon explained.

"He can pass on so much to our 15, 16 and 17-year-olds, who want to come out the other end and be first-class cricketers. He is a great mentor to them.

"He can teach them what you have to do and that's so important and it's an advantage we have here in Southland, having someone like Kevin who knows all about it."

Fitzgibbon also said Cooper's grounds-keeping know-how could not be underestimated, especially as the SCA continued to transform its Queens Park headquarters into a top first-class venue.

"He knows exactly what you need as far as ground and pitch preparation is concerned for first-class cricket. That's why he has got Queens Park up to the level it is. The other thing is his passion for the game. He just loves it and, as I said, we're lucky to have him."

PRESS RELEASE ENDS