

Copley CC 2007 Season Preview

The 2007 Halifax League season promises to be one of the most competitive in years. Copley will be only too aware of how essential it is to make a positive start to their campaign at home against Sowerby Bridge. This preview looks at the main strengths and weaknesses of this Copley side and how the squad will cope with the pressure of it all.

Strengths

THE BEST BATSMAN IN THE LEAGUE – Nick Pyrah is considered to be one of the most gifted batsmen ever to play in the Halifax League. The positive front-foot nature of his batting ensures that Copley habitually get off to a flying start when he hangs around for a while. Opposing bowlers will need to expose the Copley middle-order early on because a couple of hours of Pyrah could put the game beyond their reach.



BRILLIANT PACE BOWLERS – Tim Rushton, Richard Thorpe (above) and Mark Baldwin should form a fantastic pace bowling trio for Copley. A shoulder injury restricted Richard to just six matches in 2006 and as a consequence Mark was thrust into the unfamiliar position of opening the bowling. He stepped up in style, taking over 50 wickets during the season. With Richard and Mark probably opening the attack this time, Tim, as first change, will ensure that the batsmen get no respite. It will be interesting to see which of the three takes the most wickets in 2007.

INSPIRATIONAL CAPTAIN – Steve Priestley, or ‘Chickpea’ as he’s known, is everything that a captain should be. An inspiration to the youngsters at the club, he is a part of Copley’s coaching set-up and can be regularly found helping out with the Under-11 side. This will be his inaugural season in the role of skipper and he will be looking to put his stamp on the team immediately. An attacking batsman and outstanding wicketkeeper, it will be interesting to see how he tackles the task of leading the side. Undoubtedly possesses all the attributes of a ‘Captain Marvel’ in the making.

Weaknesses

MIDDLE-ORDER BATTING – One of the problems that Copley face in 2007 is their lack of genuine middle-order batsmen. Numbers 4 to 7 are predominantly made up of players who would prefer to face the new ball, and

although the top eight as a whole looks strong, there is an argument that the side appears to be shy of a Graham Thorpe-style nudger and nurdler at number five.

ABSENCE OF SPIN – Chris Goulden’s departure to Elland has left Copley worryingly short of slow bowling options. Nick Pyrah’s finger spin is a more than useful option, but the cupboard is bare thereafter. Goulden was a match-winner who would squeeze and frustrate opposition batsman into giving their wickets away.

PLAYERS LEAVING IN MID-SEASON – Copley’s players are a busy bunch and midway through the season usually spells an exodus of many of the squad for their summer holidays! It will mean that the second team and junior players may be given an opportunity and, long term, this should benefit the club, but whether it will be of such benefit to the 2007 season is doubtful!

Players to Watch

- **Nick Pyrah** – Dictates the pace of the innings and can single-handedly obliterate opposition bowling attacks. His spin bowling will also prove vital.
- **Mark Baldwin** – The wicket-taking paceman will be looking to emulate his performances of 2006.
- **Richard Thorpe** – A fit again Richard Thorpe would be a major boost for the side. ‘Thorpey’ is as respected as anyone in the entire Halifax League.

Main Rivalry

Warley CC – Consistently outstanding over the course of the last five seasons, Warley once again appear to have a strong set-up. Copley will need to maintain their high standards to see off the challenge of their rivals.

Overview

Copley go into their opening game of the campaign against Sowerby Bridge as firm favourites for a win. In the long term, a lot depends on the fitness of key players; with a fully fit side, Copley must be considered one of the favourites in both the league and the Parish Cup. Captain Steve Priestley should prove to be a fantastic leader for the side, but will be severely stretched should there be a reoccurrence of the shoulder injury which blighted Richard Thorpe’s 2006 season. If Nick Pyrah can deliver the goods with ball in hand, things will be looking good.