

**GREAT MATCH**  
**By Dominic Kureen**

**Opponents:** Pudsey Congs

**Venue:** Copley CC

**Date:** 22 July 2001

**Event:** Black Sheep Yorkshire Champions Trophy (Quarter-Final)

**HERCULEAN COPLEY EFFORT NOT ENOUGH TO TOPPLE GOLIATH**

Copley CC are viewed as something of a juggernaut in the world of Halifax League cricket, with most opposing teams seeing matches against them as potential giant-killings. However, on 22 July 2001 the roles were well and truly reversed. Copley had never faced anything quite as intimidating as the stars of the Bradford League, Pudsey Congs. Picture Hampshire CCC with Pietersen, Warne *et al* present and then consider how heavily the odds would be stacked against a university side opposing them in a vital cup match - then you can perhaps envisage the extent of the task which lay ahead for Copley.



**The venue: Copley Lane**

In a Pudsey side choc-a-bloc with quality, future Pakistan superstar Rana Naveed Ul-Hassan stood out as the star man. This is a player who since has been proving himself on the world stage, with his 90mph+ bowling putting the fear of God into world-class batsmen. With this threat, as well as many other classy performers in the Pudsey line-up, some pre-match reports suggested that this wasn't so much a contest as an annihilation waiting to happen. Even those at Copley were playing down their chances of anything other than a drubbing. Skipper Richard Thorpe (a keen Pudsey supporter and ex-player) told *Yorkshire Sport* in the build-up to the game: "We've had a little sweepstake at the club on the first innings score. We've a few of 350 if they bat and some of less than 100 if we bat!"

The toss was won by Copley, who sent Pudsey into bat. The initial exchanges were edged by the batting side, as openers Andy Bethel and Stuart Clifton began brightly. Richard Thorpe's opening spell was exceptional and he soon had a wicket to show

for his efforts as he had Clifton caught behind. This dismissal seemed to inspire Copley and they had Pudsey floundering at 140 for 4 with the overs ticking away. Sadly, with Thorpe out of the attack having bowled his ten overs superbly for 2 for 30 (including the prize wicket of Ul-Hassan), the other bowlers could not exert the same control, which let the batting side regain the initiative. A rapid century partnership between Najid Khan (90) and Neil Nicholson (68) meant the Congrats posted a respectable 305 for 9 in their 50 overs. But Copley's part-time seam bowler, Craig Taylor, roused the crowd towards the end of the innings as he took two wickets in as many balls in the final over.

305 was a decent score, but by no means embarrassing for Copley's attack. They had bowled well as a unit, with Thorpe in particular drawing the plaudits for his economical display. Still, it was a mammoth task to score more than at a run a ball against the Pudsey bowling attack. It became even less likely as Khan secured the man-of-the-match award with a blistering opening burst - his 3 for 18 looked as if it may ensure an early finish to the match. An excellent knock of 41 from Tim Rushton put Copley back on track; he was eventually run out as he had looked set to make a famous half-century. Lee Smith (34) and Mark Thristen (26) also offered valuable resistance as Copley posted an unlikely 208 for 7. It was a proud day for Copley CC, who despite losing by 97 runs had dispelled pre-match predictions of a humiliatingly one-sided affair.

Richard Thorpe was rightly proud of his players. After the match he told the *Evening Courier*: "We had a good crowd, a nice day and Congrats showed us respect by taking the game seriously. We did really well and the Pudsey supporters, who probably didn't know what to expect, were very complimentary about our ground and facilities."

**Copley star man: Richard Thorpe - bowled an outstanding opening spell**