

TOM THORPE – Legendary all-rounder

By Dominic Kureen

Rarely do you meet a man who is as synonymous with a cricket club as Tom Thorpe is with Copley. Tom literally helped to build the foundations for Copley's success. He recalls: 'When I first came here this was a mud track, there was no pavilion and no scoreboard. There were no grants in those days so it was the members who had to build it almost from scratch.'



Tom comes across as an affable man with no airs or graces. It would be easy for him to resent the modern Copley players who have benefited the most from the work which was put in during those years of transition at the club, yet there is none of that: 'I've seen two eras at this club which have really differed. It's not just the ground which has improved; there are now qualified coaches here, too. In the past it was experienced players of limited coaching ability who would do the job of guiding the club's youth.'

Tom began his Copley career after it became obvious that he was unlikely to reach his potential while playing on a variety of terrible wickets elsewhere. After a short period in the colt and second XI sides, Tom was chosen for the first team when it became apparent to those in charge that he was ready to bring his left-arm seam bowling and useful middle-order batting to the first team. Despite his promotion to the 1st XI, Tom had to change and train with the 2nd XI side until he was established as a first-team regular. 'That was a silly rule really,' he says. 'It was confusing to play with the first team on a matchday, but not to be recognised as a part of it at any other time.'

One of the few men to take nine wickets in a match and also score a century for the club, there can be no doubting that Tom's credentials have earned him legendary status within since his retirement in the early 1980s. The enthusiasm he has for Copley Cricket Club, the way he waxes lyrical about the past and embraces the present, and the way in which he has helped to build the foundations of the club on every level possible, make him an indispensable and highly respected individual in local cricket circles.

Perhaps it was fate that Tom should meet his wife, Judith, at the club. Since then she has played a major part in organising a women's section and continues to have an important role behind the scenes. Judith is the mother of Richard and Andrew, who have both played a vital role in Copley's recent successes (Richard is the current club captain). Meanwhile Judith's brother, Alan Ball, has also played a crucial role in the revolution that has taken place at Copley over the years. It is clear that the Thorpe family tree is one of the most consistent sources of players for Copley CC!

Tom continues to carry out essential responsibilities at the ground he lives only a ten-minute walk away from. He is the man who prepares the wicket for matchdays, aiming to provide pitches of consistent bounce and movement.

Key moment: Leading the side to the 1966 2nd XI championship (below)



First XI – Season 1966
Hullfax League Winners Division II
Harry Pickles (Secretary) Ian Ball Brian Hulme John Dixon Ken Hubbard Charles Crossley Brian Drake
Albert Greenwood Gordon Jacobs Roy Smith (President) Tom Thurpe (Captain) Harry Wood Derek Smith