

The Great Match

Dramatic Finale Halts Gallant Cup Run (Again!)

By Jon O'Shea

Northowram's remarkable Parish Cup run of 1995 had already included a startling 22-run defeat of the 1994 runners-up Bradshaw in the previous round. A trip to Sowerby St. Peters (below) in late June for an unexpected cup semi-final appearance saw Hedge Top, as a struggling second division side, arrive as considerable underdogs. But they left with heads held high, having bravely come within inches of an unexpected triumph.



Captain Bruce Deadman's fine innings was instrumental in Hedge Top's total of 169 for nine, though he was run out on 59, and Richard Leach also added a handy 27 for the visitors. As a first division side though, Sowerby remained confident that they could comfortably reach the required total against their lower league opponents. Therefore, when they made swift inroads into their target, reaching 113 for 1 with the help of Malcolm Grimley's 52, it looked very much as if their plan was being expertly adhered to.

However, a middle-order collapse prompted by some excellent Northowram bowling (including three crucial wickets for Chris Hoey) saw the home team requiring 21 runs from the final three overs in order to reach the August final at Copley. Though Sowerby's Nigel Fielden then managed a spectacular six, by the final over they still needed nine more for victory. As Northowram youngster Hoey ran in to deliver the final ball of the semi-final Sowerby's no.6, teenager Matthew Greenwood, needed to come up with a four to tie or hit six to win.

The match reached its thrilling climax as Greenwood daringly hammered the delivery over mid-wicket to the longest boundary on the ground, but Northowram's Martin Reed was positioned underneath the ball as gravity took effect. Reed completed the catch but controversially, and agonisingly for Northowram, the match umpires ruled that he had not been able to do so before his feet hit the tarmac of the car park which acted as boundary. Their brilliant fightback had been in vain as Sowerby celebrated reaching the 107th edition of Parish Cup final, with young Greenwood declared their hero.

Extraordinarily, this wasn't the first occasion on which Northowram had crashed out of the Parish Cup's penultimate stage on the last ball. During the halcyon days of the mid-1960s, Hedge Top, cup-holders after their memorable 1965 triumph, lost out to Booth due to a snicked four conceded with the final delivery of the match. This was at a time when cup matches were played in consecutive evenings over the course of a week (occasionally stretching into a second week and beyond!) due to work, religious and travel restrictions. Nonetheless, the club's emphatic triumph in the league that year proved no little consolation for their unfortunate exit.

Though there were nearly 30 years between the remarkable ties, they surely both encapsulate the 'magic' of the cup, and it's certain that their improbable climaxes will be long remembered by all who witnessed them.