

## 2006 Season Review

By David Febrero

Despite countless obstacles, Shelf almost added the Bradford Central League title to their list of honours in their last ever season in the league. Although league successes have been few and far between at the club, there were confident early-season expectations after the league introduced new rules regarding player selection after allegations that some clubs had used non-listed, and even professional, players.

“Girlington, Laisterdyke and Great Horton Church are usually challenging for the title while we were generally a mid-table team,” club secretary and first-team batsman Andy Dimbleby said. “But they performed really poorly. Did this have something to do with the new ID cards players had to have? Who knows?” he added with a wry smile. Evidently, these cards blocked clubs playing ‘ringers’, which is usually unstoppable in amateur sport.



Shelf began the season in confident form, and were unbeaten for the opening eight games. Although this was the longest unbeaten sequence the team managed, they never dropped into their typical ‘mid-table’ position. However, despite early-season buoyancy regarding the effect of ID cards, they came back to haunt Shelf – ironically.

“We were joint top of the league just over halfway through the season,” Andy remembers. “But Norwood Green, who eventually won the league, claimed 12 points for ID infringements”. In addition, Norwood played an extra three games while Shelf had theirs called off. “To be denied winning the league because of pressure on umpires to play games and ID rulings going against us was upsetting to say the least,” bemoaned Andy. Despite losing just three games all season, Shelf finished a disappointing second.

After successful cup runs in previous years, the club was also tipped to challenge for the Waddilove Cup. However, the team were knocked out in the opening round by eventual finalists BT. “It definitely made it worse that they got to the final,” Andy said. “We batted and played very poorly but still only finished 10 runs short of victory. We probably would have won the game but we ended up with 10 men because Steve Priestley (our number four batter) left at half-time to watch a Bon Jovi concert!”

Despite the obvious annoyances at losing the league due to other teams’ inability to field registered players, Shelf are looking forward to competing in the Halifax League in 2007. “We had played our best cricket since I have been there,” Andy said. “But the standard as a whole was the poorest I have seen”. First-team wicketkeeper Johnny Marshall added: “Everyone is really confident we can perform well at the new standard - we just can’t wait to get started”.