

Wharton believes Sharma can be Scholes' saviour

INDIAN Test cricketer Chetan Sharma is undoubtedly the key to Scholes' hopes of staving off the threat of relegation.

The 28-year-old all-rounder arrived at the Holme Valley club two weeks ago as a replacement for the injured Rashid Patel, and Scholes are pinning their bid on him as they approach the run-in to their first season in Section A.

Skipper Paul Wharton thinks his side still have a chance to turn things around — even though they share the foot of the table with Linthwaite — and believes Sharma will turn out to be a superb acquisition.

"Chetan is obviously a very good player, having taken more than 70 Test wickets for India, and he's going to give us very good control at one end," said Wharton.

"He was actually coming over to England for a wedding, and when he heard of our plight through Patel (the



DRAKES LEAGUE
CRICKET

by DAVID
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two men are close friends) he decided to help us out."

Sharma is staying with his uncle, a Milnsbridge doctor, and is expected to continue playing for Scholes until the end of the season.

He has previous experience of English league cricket in a spell with Bolton in the Central Lancashire League and, according to Wharton, has already been impressed by the standard of amateur cricketers in the Huddersfield League.

But as Wharton points out, Sharma has been used to playing against teams with

10 amateur players and only one professional.

Nevertheless, he has made a useful start to his Drakes League career, with four wickets in his first game against Linthwaite, followed by a knock of 88 last week-end against Elland, although his side lost the match at Hullen Edge.

"I reckon we need to win four out of our last eight games to stay up, and that certainly won't be easy, but it really is important to the club to stay in Section A," continued Wharton.

"We have worked very hard to get there and we need to stay there, particularly for chairman Steve Booth who is the real driving force behind the club."

Scholes have certainly made big strides since joining the Drakes Huddersfield League at the beginning of the 1988 season, and only four years ago they proudly opened a brand new pavilion.

The continual upgrading of the ground includes members building a rather splendid-looking conservatory on the existing bar and tea room. And the club's league representative, Paul Whiteley, reported that the club have just been connected to the telephone.

"Scholes were founded in 1876, the same year that Alexander Graham Bell invented the phone, so it has only taken 118 years to link the two events," said Whiteley, jovially.

But the main business at Chapelgate is cricket, and although the second team have done particularly well this season to reach the finals of two competitions — the Paddock Shield and the Heavy Woollen Crowther Cup — the attention is centred on the first team's relegation struggle.

"I think we've done quite well to be still in with a chance of staying in the top flight in our first season," said Wharton, "and had Rashid been fit, we would certainly have won two or three more games."

"On the plus side, Simon Kenworthy has bowled really well to claim 33 wickets, and Andrew Hutchinson has also proved to be a good signing from Paddock, but all our bowlers have tended to be a bit expensive."

"Ian Bray has also been a major influence this season, after moving up to open the innings, and has hit almost 500 runs. Since he packed in professional football with Burnley and Town, Ian has taken his cricket very seriously."

But as in all sport, when you are up against it, nothing tends to go your way. And Scholes have suffered particularly badly with injuries this season.

Apart from Patel returning to India with a shoulder injury, vice-captain Daryl Brook — after finding some useful form — has been out for a lengthy spell with an infected toe, complicated by gout, and another new signing Harvey Kenworthy has missed sev-



Chetan Sharma — made a promising start in the Drakes Huddersfield League with both bat and ball

new signing Harvey Ownsworth, has missed several games because of work commitments, and then through an injured knee for which he has undergone an exploratory operation.

And the skipper himself has hit a run of poor form by his own standards, after getting away to a solid start in which he notched over 300 runs in the first seven games.

"I started well enough, but then things haven't gone right. It happens. I've been through bad spells before, and come through all right.

"I don't think it's the pressure of captaincy, although skippering in Section A is far more demanding than in Section B, where generally there are only about four good sides to worry about.

"In the top section they are all strong sides and there is so much more to consider," added Wharton.