

BACK TO LEAD THE SIDE

IAN HODGSON ON GRAEME HURLBATT

The Zimbabwean-born, former Broad Oak professional has returned to captain the side!

Some people believe in second spells at clubs, where others see it as a romance waiting to fail. However, with Graeme Hurlbatt returning, it can only be good news for Broad Oak. In his spell at the club as a player in the late 1980s, he was a bowling all-rounder and a very aggressive middle-order batsmen.

After this, Hurlbatt played a year at Primrose Hill before leaving for Skelmanthorpe, who had their most successful period with him on their books. He was also very successful as a player, picking up trophies and playing in a cup final. Skelmanthorpe at the time had an embarrassing amount of talent at their disposal, with Ronnie Irani, the former Essex captain and England international, teaming up with the former Broad Oak player.

During his spell at Skelmanthorpe, the bowling all-rounder had a stint at the captaincy. The fact that he won trophies there is surely evidence that he has the leadership skills required to do a successful job at Broad Oak this year.



**Graham in his
Skelmanthorpe
days, 1990**

In 2005, Hurlbatt initially decided to call it a day at Skelmanthorpe after an extremely successful period, but went back on his word to skipper Shelley. He led by example, taking wickets and scoring runs, a trait that Broad Oak hope he can repeat. Shelley went through that season with just two defeats, against Marsden and Kirkheaton. There wasn't a game that went by where he didn't take wickets and he was the first player in the Conference to reach the 50-wicket mark for the season and win a prize of £50. His batting was also highly influential at important times with a highest score of 85 not out.

Hurlbatt had a brief career in South Africa, playing for Natal in 1983/4. Despite struggling with the bat, he had a superb bowling average of 20.91, taking twelve wickets in four matches. He also played for Scotland nine times between June 1994 and May 1997. Batting middle to lower order, he top scored with 28 against Northamptonshire

with a batting average of 10. With the ball he took five wickets for the Scots with best figures of 1-18.

It wasn't a matter of Broad Oak choosing Graeme Hurlbatt; it was a matter of Hurlbatt choosing Broad Oak. As a well known and respected player across the Drakes Huddersfield League, Hurlbatt would have had no shortage of offers, but the fact that he has returned to captain his former club is testament to the quality of the club and the bright it possesses.

Groundsman Craig McCreadie is confident Hurlbatt can "help provide the leadership to guide the first team back up to the Premiership". He goes on: "He chose Broad Oak, he knows the club, and we're pleased to give him the chance."