

# LABOUR OF LOVE

Q & A: CRAIG McCREADIE - THE GROUNDSMAN  
BY IAN HODGSON

**IH: How long have you been a groundsman for?**

CM: For Broad Oak? Since 1990, which would make it 18 years this year.

**IH: Is this the only club that you've been at?**

CM: No, I run my own little business and I work for a number of Huddersfield League clubs. Broad Oak was my first.



**IH: How did you first get into it and what made you decide to be a groundsman?**

CM: I didn't really decide as such! I went to University in the 1970s and became a teacher in a school in Leeds. It was at a time where they used to have individual groundsman at schools, but a lot of reorganisation took place with the local authorities taking groundsman out of the schools. The ground work was then supposed to be done by the local authorities, but unfortunately they never came and did it. So either the PE teachers did it, or no-one got to play. Therefore I took myself on a couple of courses to make sure I knew what I was doing and that's how it started.

**IH: So as a groundsman how do you prepare the wicket and the square?**

CM: Well, throughout the winter the square is kept 'aerated', so it is spiked regularly and cut just to make sure it stays in condition. We start for each individual game about two weeks before, by scarifying all the unwanted inorganic matter off the pitch, which cleans it up. We then roll it, but this has to be done in the right conditions, when it's damp. If the surface is bone dry then you really need it to be watered so you can press down on the surface. Once we've done that we cut it as low as we possibly can, without damaging the surface and then we hope the sun comes out to bake it.

**IH: Is it easy to prepare and maintain wickets?**

CM: You'll find that cricket wickets are prepared according to the standard of the game that is being played. I'm not trying to pretend this is Test-standard but it's still a pretty good local league. It would be a waste of time and money for these clubs to sign professional players and for them not to give them a decent surface to play on.

**IH: So you'll try and prepare as flat a wicket as you can?**

CM: I would prepare as good a wicket as is possible within the environmental conditions which prevail at the time. You can do certain things to tweak it but that's not what we do here.

**IH: have you ever prepared a wicket that has been inconsistent?**

CM: Yes but not intentionally! If it rains and puts moisture into a very flat hard baked surface then it can become inconsistent.

**IH: How much work is entailed per week during the season?**

CM: The work at the club probably entails about 10 hours a week. That's because the Under-13s play on a Sunday morning, the Under-15s play on a Monday night, the Under-17s play on a Wednesday night and train on a Tuesday night. Meanwhile the First and Second XIs play on a Saturday and Sunday plus we've got all the cup games to fit in as well.

**IH: Is there much work to do in the off-season?**

CM: Yes, but obviously not as much as during the season. Throughout the season you're mainly concerned with preparing wickets and renovating them whereas in the close season you're just making sure that the grass has enough time to recover.

**IH: Finally, are there any tips or advice you could give to any groundsman starting up?**

CM: Make sure you've got some equipment that you know works and that's going to do the job it is supposed to do. There is nothing more frustrating than turning up to do a job and the machine doesn't start.