

## **‘A Double of Sorts’:**

### **When Nought Not Out Won the League**

‘A double of sorts’ was the *Todmorden News and Advertiser’s* understated verdict on Walsden’s triumphant season of 1962. The club won the Wood Cup and became champions of the Central Lancashire League for the first time, sharing the title with Stockport after a dramatic final day.

Nothing had seemed less likely at the end of June. Walsden were languishing in ninth place, 13 points behind leaders Stockport and had won just 3 of their last 11 games.

Progress was smoother in the Wood Cup. In the first round professional Bob Bartels (6 for 36 and 74 not out) was magnificent against Milnrow. Jack Coupe (7 for 34) demolished Heywood in round 2 and the team received a huge confidence boost by beating Gary Sobers’ Radcliffe over three nights in the semi-final at the start of July. Bartels and Peter Green both took five wickets as Radcliffe were dismissed for 145. Sobers, batting extremely low at number six, was left stranded with the tail and made 38. A whirlwind 42 in 36 minutes by Allan Stuttard, who struck Sobers for two sixes in an over, put the result beyond doubt and although the great West Indian took three wickets, his 14 overs cost 74 runs.

Despite ignominious defeat to Castleton Moor who won only twice all season, Walsden closed on the

league leaders in July. At the end of the month Radcliffe were despatched a second time, Sobers' 71 and 8 for 78 not enough to prevent defeat by 91 runs, and Middleton were defeated in the Wood Cup final at Milnrow, the match running to four evenings. Basil D'Oliveira made 40 of Middleton's 156, but solid batting right down the order steered Walsden to victory by five wickets.

With three matches left the double was 'on'. Walsden were third, four points behind joint leaders, Stockport and Radcliffe. Victory at Stockport was essential and duly achieved, and a home win over Rochdale put Walsden top with one match to play as Radcliffe and Stockport slipped up against lowly opposition.

Three points ahead of Stockport and four ahead of Radcliffe, victory in the last match at Milnrow would guarantee Walsden the title. A draw would guarantee a share of it.

All looked fair as Milnrow were dismissed for 120 and Walsden cruised to 81 for 3. Then the wheels came off; Milnrow professional Cec Abrahams ran through the middle order. At 95 for 9 with twenty minutes to play Walsden's title dreams were hanging by a thread.

An appeal against the light was rejected and last pair Peter Horne and number 11 Jack Coupe defended grimly in the gathering gloom. A close lbw appeal against Coupe in the final over was turned

down and Walsden survived, Coupe 7 not out and Horne still on zero after the longest half hour of his cricketing life.

News of victory for Stockport confirmed two things. The title had been shared – and Peter Horne had just played the most valuable nought not out in the history of the league.