

“THE CLUB HAS TO ENSURE THE RETENTION AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THESE YOUNG PLAYERS”

Junior Cricket by Paul Rai

What is the future of cricket? What is happening at grassroots level to encourage participation in cricket? Is there enough occurring for the game to be sustainable in the future? And from where will the next Freddie Flintoffs and Ryan Sidebottoms emerge?

It is the job of village cricket clubs to provide cricket for local youngsters. Thanks to many clubs like Armitage Bridge, participation in the sport is on the up. To support this, the England and Wales Cricket Board has announced a 27 per cent increase in participation in club and schools cricket during 2006/07.

ABCC is doing as much as it can to develop cricketers for the future. The Bridge have two senior teams competing in the Drakes-sponsored Huddersfield League and the club also has teams competing in the Sellers Huddersfield Junior Cricket League at Under-11, -13, -15 and -17 levels. Investment in youth is important for the development of the senior sides. During 1988 no fewer than 20 of the players who represented the Bridge in the two senior sides were products of the junior teams. Fifteen of the players began playing in the under-13 side at ABCC.

Not only are the Bridge providing cricket for young people, they are fielding competitive and successful youth teams. Just last season the Bridge under-17s side won its section of the league, and club secretary John Bunch explains how good the achievement was. He said: “The junior side of the club has once again excelled itself.”

Position	U17 Area C	Played	Won	Tied	Lost	3	1	Points
1	Armitage Bridge	12	2	0	0	5	5	28
2	Rastrick	12	1	0	1	6	4	26
3	Almondbury Wes	12	1	0	0	4	7	23
4	Kirkheaton	12	2	0	1	2	7	21
5	Elland	12	2	0	1	2	7	21
6	Lascelles Hall	12	1	0	1	3	7	20
7	Honley	12	0	0	0	3	9	18
8	Old Almondburians	12	0	0	5	0	7	7

After the Bridge under-17s won their section of the league, they progressed to the Romida Walker Cup final where they met Thurstonland, and club secretary Bunch said: "The final on a chilly Sunday afternoon at Meltham was another memorable day for the club." He added that the Bridge "side, who probably started as underdogs, matched their opponents closely for skill and determination. In the end the difference amounted to a few boundaries conceded in the early stages." Despite defeat, the under-17 side can be extremely proud of their achievements last season.

Two players from last season's under-17 side finished in the top-15 runscorers in the league. Hussain scored 302 runs in his 12 knocks and Jenkins amassed 235 in his 12 innings for the junior side. Oliver Huntington impressed with a haul of 21 wickets over the season and Matthew Oakes led the league with most outfield catches - clinging on to eight in nine matches, and catches most certainly do win matches! These players are showing potential to move up to the senior sides, and who knows what can happen from there.

Last season's success has now gone and the new season is creeping up quickly. Fixtures for the under-17 side have been released by the Sellers Huddersfield Junior Cricket League and the opening fixture on April 30th 2008 will see a replay of the 2007 Walker Cup Final as Bridge take on Thurstonland at home. Fixtures for the season are shown below.

Under 17					
30 April 2008	Area B	Armitage Bridge	v	Thurstonland	U17
07 May 2008	Area B	Denby Dale	v	Armitage Bridge	U17
14 May 2008	Area B	Armitage Bridge	v	Shepley	U17
21 May 2008	Area B	Green Moor	v	Armitage Bridge	U17
28 May 2008	Area B	Armitage Bridge	v	Almondbury Wes	U17
04 June 2008	Area B	Shelley	v	Armitage Bridge	U17
11 June 2008	Area B	Armitage Bridge	v	Edgerton & Dalton	U17
18 June 2008	Area B	Skelmanthorpe	v	Armitage Bridge	U17
25 June 2008	Area B	Armitage Bridge	v	Paddock	U17
02 July 2008	Area B	Kirkburton	v	Armitage Bridge	U17
09 July 2008	Area B	Armitage Bridge	v	Lascelles Hall	U17
16 July 2008	Area B	Kirkheaton	v	Armitage Bridge	U17
23 July 2008	Area B	Armitage Bridge	v	Kexborough	U17
30 July 2008	Area B	Armitage Bridge	v	t.b.a.	U17

All other junior teams struggled to match their older counterparts; however, they didn't do to badly either. The under-15s finished third in their league, the under-13s ended sixth out of 14 teams and the under-11s proved they were no pushovers, finishing in mid-table. John Bunch gave his thoughts on the achievements of the junior outfits: "They all performed well and finished in good positions in their leagues. The club has to ensure the retention and further development of these young players."

Upcoming fixtures for the under-15s, -13s and -11s are shown below.

Under 15					
28 April 2008	Area B	Lascelles Hall	v	Armitage Bridge	U15
05 May 2008	Area B	Armitage Bridge	v	Almondbury Wes	U15
09 May 2008	Cup	Armitage Bridge	v	Marsden	U15
12 May 2008	Area B	Holmbridge	v	Armitage Bridge	U15
19 May 2008	Area B	Slaithwaite	v	Armitage Bridge	U15
27 May 2008	Area B	Armitage Bridge	v	Honley	U15
02 June 2008	Area B	Thongsbridge	v	Armitage Bridge	U15
09 June 2008	Area B	Armitage Bridge	v	Scholes	U15
16 June 2008	Area B	Broad Oak	v	Armitage Bridge	U15
23 June 2008	Area B	Armitage Bridge	v	Meltham	U15
30 June 2008	Area B	Kirkburton	v	Armitage Bridge	U15
07 July 2008	Area B	Armitage Bridge	v	Holmfirth A	U15
14 July 2008	Area B	Armitage Bridge	v	Lascelles Hall	U15
21 July 2008	Area B	Almondbury Wes	v	Armitage Bridge	U15
28 July 2008	Area B	Armitage Bridge	v	t.b.a.	U15

Under 13					
04 May 2008	Area 13A	Broad Oak	v	Armitage Bridge	U13
11 May 2008	Area 13A	Armitage Bridge	v	Thongsbridge	U13
18 May 2008	Cup	Armitage Bridge	v	Upper Hopton	U13
25 May 2008	Area 13A	Rastrick	v	Armitage Bridge	U13
01 June 2008	Area 13A	Scholes	v	Armitage Bridge	U13
08 June 2008	Area 13A	Armitage Bridge	v	Kirkheaton	U13
15 June 2008	Area 13A	Almondbury Wes	v	Armitage Bridge	U13
22 June 2008	Area 13A	Armitage Bridge	v	Meltham	U13
29 June 2008	Area 13A	Crigglestone	v	Armitage Bridge	U13
06 July 2008	Area 13A	Armitage Bridge	v	Denby Dale	U13
13 July 2008	Area 13A	Kirkburton	v	Armitage Bridge	U13
20 July 2008	Area 13A	Armitage Bridge	v	Lascelles Hall	U13
03 August 2008	Area 13A	Armitage Bridge	v	Broad Oak	U13
10 August 2008	Area 13A	Thongsbridge	v	Armitage Bridge	U13
17 August 2008	Area 13A	Armitage Bridge	v	t.b.a.	U13

Under 11					
04 May 2008	Area 11A	Armitage Bridge	v	Almondbury Wes	U11
11 May 2008	Area 11A	Holmbridge	v	Armitage Bridge	U11
25 May 2008	Area 11A	Armitage Bridge	v	Thongsbridge	U11
01 June 2008	Area 11A	Armitage Bridge	v	Upperthong	U11
08 June 2008	Area 11A	Golcar	v	Armitage Bridge	U11
15 June 2008	Area 11A	Armitage Bridge	v	Meltham	U11
22 June 2008	Area 11A	Holmfirth	v	Armitage Bridge	U11
29 June 2008	Area 11A	Armitage Bridge	v	Scholes	U11
06 July 2008	Area 11A	Paddock	v	Armitage Bridge	U11
13 July 2008	Area 11A	Armitage Bridge	v	Delph & Dobcross	U11
20 July 2008	Area 11A	Slaithwaite	v	Armitage Bridge	U11
27 July 2008	Area 11A	Armitage Bridge	v	Marsden	U11
03 August 2008	Area 11A	Broad Oak	v	Armitage Bridge	U11
10 August 2008	Area 11A	Armitage Bridge	v	t.b.a.	U11