

'JONTY' SIGNS UP!

New Overseas Signing by Paul Rai

When you think of great South African all-rounders, the names Jacques Kallis and Shaun Pollock come to mind. Armitage Bridge have completed a major coup by signing their own South African all-rounder for the upcoming summer. His name is Garth Roeloffze and he recently celebrated his 26th birthday in Huddersfield. Hopefully, the left-arm quick and the Bridge will have much more to celebrate during the 2008 season. I caught up with Garth at the end of a recent net session at Newsome High School.



Whereabouts in South Africa are you from?

A little town called Kimberley; it's in central South Africa. It's about a four-and-a-half-hour drive south of Johannesburg.

How did you get into playing cricket and how long have you been playing?

I've been playing basically since I could walk. I've always played as far back as I can remember. My dad is a big cricket fan. I used to go to a competition they've got back home for the youngsters called mini-cricket. Every Saturday I used to go with my seven bats, wooden bats and I really, really enjoyed it. I just picked it up from there and I've never fell out of it.

What teams did you play for in South Africa?

I only played for the one club. But I have being playing for this one club since I was 14 years old. It was back in Kimberley and the club is called West End. I have being playing for them since I was 14 up until September 2006 when I moved over to England.

Apart from cricket what else do you enjoy doing?

I really, really enjoy rugby as well. Rugby union not league, I'm not very fond of league. Again I used to play rugby back home, just before I came over here and I enjoy tennis and golf as well. I don't play rugby over here – it's just cricket for me.

As an all-rounder, what do you prefer - bowling or batting? And what parts of your game do you work on more?

At this moment I'm not sure to be honest with you [laughter]. I used to be a batting all-rounder. Batting always came first and then the bowling.

Would you prefer to take a five-wicket haul or score a century?

Hundred! Score a hundred yeah! Definitely, most definitely!

Where do you field and what are you like in the field?

My nickname in primary school was Jonty. I always used to field at backward point and I love diving around, I live for my fielding! We had this big competition as well where we played day-night games on some of the big grounds in South Africa and I always, always wanted to bat first and field under the lights!

Have you ever played cricket overseas before - if so where and who for?

No, this is the first time for me.

What made you want to join ABCC?

It's actually thanks to my friend Louie. I was looking for a club and we were at Scholes CC last year. I didn't play for them I just fielded for them a couple of times. Louie had a word with Moose [James Moorhouse] and they got me into Armitage Bridge. The first day I met the guys, I really enjoyed the atmosphere at Armitage Bridge. Everybody is friendly and helpful. So really, really nice!

How does Huddersfield compare to South Africa?

Huddersfield is actually the closest thing to South Africa for me because of all the open fields and the quietness of the town and everything. I just came to visit my friend, Louie, for a weekend and I told him listen here, in two weeks time I'm moving up here. I went back to London packed up everything and two weeks later I was here. From the beginning I literally fell in love with this place.

What do you like most about Huddersfield?

Huddersfield...erm...I must say the talent! [Laughter] No, no, it's actually the people. Everybody is so much more friendly over here. Life is not a big rush over here. Everybody is chilled out, taking it easy and I really enjoy that.

What are your aims for the upcoming season?

My aim for the upcoming season are to at least score around 700/800 runs over the whole season and get about 30-odd wickets. I'm thinking about batting number five but I think Rick is going to push me up the order at three or four. I think it's going to be three.

As a South African what is your opinion on players like Kevin Pietersen and Jacques Rudolph turning their back on their home country?

Pietersen, I've got a lot of respect for him. For him coming over here, it was tough and really bad what they did to him. He was picked for a team back home and they had to leave him out of the team because of the quota system. He decided that he was going to come over here, so fair play. But the

attitude he has towards South Africa now, I don't appreciate that. But Rudolph yes! He was in the same situation and a class player. I'm really happy for the guys; if that's what they have to do, if that's their life, go for it. Whatever makes you happy!

What do you think of the quota system and transformation policy in South African cricket selection?

I think it is really unfair. I mean you have to pick a player on merit. If he is good enough pick him. It doesn't matter what colour he is, if he is good enough then he needs to be in the team.

The South Africans are touring England in July this year. How do you think they will fare on English soil?

Oh, after South Africa's win recently, England will struggle. Dale Steyn is looking very good as well. I think he will take loads of wickets this tour. Batting-wise, I'm quite happy with McKenzie these days and I'm actually really impressed. A.B.De Villiers as well is scoring lots of runs lately; I'm pleased for him as he has got so much talent and he is starting to make use of it.