

# FROM £1 GEORGE TO £750,000 DHONI!

## The Professional Cricketer by Paul Rai

What does a professional cricketer bring to the party? He should bring commitment, dedication, passion, talent, skill and, most importantly, runs, wickets and catches.

In recent years ABCC have sacrificed signing professional cricketers in order to develop the foundations of their club. A spokesman said: 'We've made a definite decision to put money into facilities rather than professionals, and as a result it's a very sociable club. We've got lots of families involved.'

As a consequence of ploughing money into their facilities, the club now has a picturesque ground that they can call their own and a high quality clubhouse. There was, however, a time when the club did hire professionals. In 1944 and 1945 George Boothroyd was employed by the club to play professionally.

Boothroyd began his career at Armitage Bridge as a bag carrier and scorer. In 1939 when the then professional, Beaumont, scored 111 not out against Slaithwaite, Boothroyd was in attendance as a spectator. When the Bridge found they were missing a player, he was asked to play. Boothroyd's cricket career began and he played a crucial part in borrowed boots.



Boothroyd developed as a cricketer and his ability on the field made him the youngest player in both ABCC first and second teams before the Second World War. Eventually Boothroyd earned his first

professional cricket contract in 1944. The agreement between Boothroyd and Armitage Bridge Cricket Club is shown above.

The contract stipulates that 'George Boothroyd agrees to play as match professional for the above mentioned club (ABCC) during season 1944, the club agrees to pay him the sum of one pound per match and travelling expenses.' To compare this with how much a professional cricketer can earn in modern cricket is fascinating. Mahendra Singh Dhoni stands to make an astonishing £750,000 for a minimum of 280 overs in the upcoming IPL (Indian Premier League) season. If his team, Chennai, fail to progress to the tournament semi-final, Dhoni will have made £2,678 per over - and for some of those overs he will have had no involvement in the game!

Boothroyd was a professional for ABCC in both 1944 and 1945. In 1945 the Bridge won their last six league games and thus the Hopkinson Trophy. Boothroyd missed many games that season due to army duties. Missing games turned out to be a blessing in disguise for Boothroyd, however, as he gained experience playing in representative sides with Maurice Leyland during the war.

Playing alongside Leyland was an educational experience for Boothroyd. Leyland had 41 Tests to his name and also had the experience of playing a pivotal role in Sir Len Hutton's famous innings of 364 against the Australians at the Oval in 1938. Leyland scored 187 before being run out and added 382 runs for England's second wicket with Hutton.

In 1946 Boothroyd left the Bridge and signed professionally for Shepley but returned to the Bridge the season after. Not as a professional though. Football commitments with Mossley in the Cheshire League meant he missed some cricket in 1947. Had he been a professional he wouldn't have missed any games! Village teams often have problems as their amateur players have work, school or family commitments, which often take priority over a game of cricket.

1948 saw Boothroyd's experience with Leyland pay off as he bowled 235.4 overs for 63 wickets at an average of 11.40. With the bat he scored 404 runs at an average of 25.5. He was becoming a useful all-rounder and also as Bridge captain he was really quite a player. That season his figures indicated that he led from the front.

Boothroyd's greatest season for ABCC came in 1949 when he took 71 wickets to win the 1st eleven league bowling prize. Against Hall Bower the Bridge recorded a score of 200-plus with Boothroyd scoring 96 not out. During his period with the club he was actively engaged with the junior sides. This was the mark of a true professional - putting something back into the game that gave him so much.