

THE MONEY MAN!

Bob Friend and Sponsorship by Mark Edmonds

Bob Friend is a busy man. On top of owning his own business, he is also in charge of securing sponsorship deals with various local businesses to safeguard the future of Barkisland Cricket Club. This has become even more crucial since the club's move from the Halifax League to the Huddersfield League, which also meant a step up from amateur to semi-pro level competition.



“Now that we’re semi-pro, the monetary side of the club is even more important,” says Bob. “We obviously have to pay the overseas professional, as well as a few of the other players so that we can compete in the division.” When asked how much of the playing budget comes from sponsorship money, Bob estimates that it’s around the 75 per cent mark, which just goes to illustrate the importance of good sponsors.

The sponsors involved are always on a season-by-season basis, which means a lot of work for Bob throughout the close season. With the club’s promotion from the Frank Platt Conference in 2007, however, this year has the potential to be the club’s most successful year financially. “Getting sponsors on board has been going really well this winter,” Bob enthuses. “We’ve got seven or eight main sponsors signed up, all of them local companies and they’re all really positive about the club.”

At first glance, that amount of sponsors could seem excessive for a village cricket side. However, when one digs a little deeper it soon becomes apparent that there are so many aspects of the club that go unnoticed which are in fact extremely important to the club's wellbeing. "The sponsorship we gain is central to the running of the junior section in particular," notes Bob. "It helps to pay for the coaches, equipment such as stumps and balls as well as the training facilities. Without that investment, we wouldn't be able to help many of our young players and then we'd lose potential first-team players for the senior side."

Bob continues: "I've only been involved in the sponsorship side of the club in the last three years, but I feel that we as a club have already built up a good relationship with companies in the local area. We originally make contact via the phone, but it's when we meet local businesses face-to-face that we strike deals with them, and I think they like our enthusiasm – it rubs off on them as well."

On top of the season-long sponsorship deals, extra income also comes from individual match ball and fixture sponsors. They act as a 'top-up' to the coffers and help finance general maintenance throughout the season. Local businesses also hold marquee events at the ground on some matchdays which not only benefit the businesses themselves, but also the club as well. There are commercial opportunities everywhere, it seems, and Bob certainly hopes they will continue!