

SO NEAR BUT YET SO FAR

Story of the 2007 Season by Matt Ottey

Last season ended on a frustrating note for both Nortonthorpe teams, with the first and second elevens missing out on promotion by a hair's breadth.



Yet when I heard the story below I thought it summed up last year's campaign better than I could. So here it is, in the words of Roger Littlewood:

I remember the last game of the season; we had to win against Denby if we were going to have a chance of promotion. We had a good crowd and it was a lovely day, and we were at home against them. We'd beaten them away and they were a good side.

They posted a decent score in their innings and of course, batting second, it was always going to go down, quite literally, to the wire. There was just this feeling from the moment the first ball was bowled that it was going to be close.

I went in at number 9, and I'd only decided to bat there just in case we needed someone to hang around with Danny Kirk, who had basically taken our score to a reasonable level, but we were still 60-odd runs short of beating their total. We lost 8 wickets and of course they were waiting to start celebrating a comfortable win.

But that's when you need strength of character from everybody, and I felt that well, now, was the time to play a captain's innings, and in that situation you need someone who'll support the man at the other end, and by that time he was seeing the ball as big as a football of course, and I think he ended up with 70-odd not out.

Anyway I was going to give him support and certainly hold my end up; also, if I got the opportunity, score some runs, and I did. So we took the score on - I think they got 180, 190, something like that and when I went into bat we were something like 110 for 8, I think, and we took the score to within about four runs of their total.

Anyway, he ran me out, didn't he! He basically played a forward defensive shot that went straight to mid-off and called for a run. Now, even though I'm fairly good at backing up I was halfway down the pitch and there was no way I was going to

make it because, well, I'm an old bloke and you'd need to be a whippet to make that, and, of course, I was run out by a mile, and they're applauding, cheering, patting themselves on the back; they were thinking they'd come so close to losing, and now they were going to win.

I came off the pitch to applause because all the first team were back, standing with beers in their hands. It was nice to be applauded off - between us we'd taken the score to within a hair's breadth of winning. And, of course, Denby thought they were defeated, their heads were down because they thought it was only a matter of time before we knocked off the winning runs. But now their heads were back up, looking for the final wicket, and they knew Brian (Woodhead), who was the last batsman, was hit or miss.

I was furious. We had come so close to snatching victory out the jaws of defeat in a game we needed to win, and now it was a 50/50 chance because Brian was never going to go looking for the singles.

Fortunately, when Brian went in he managed to swipe at the ball and hoiked it over slip, because they'd brought the field right in.

We won in the end, but the two teams above us had won as well so it was all immaterial. That summed our season up - so near but yet so far.