

STORY OF RIVALRY, LOYALTY, CONTINUITY AND SUCCESS

Local Players and League Cricket by Matt Ottey

Some players from the local area play for more than one team during their career. This local merry-go-round provokes different views on rivalry, loyalty, continuity and success.

Matt Hayes, current second team captain at Nortonthorpe, believes it promotes competition between players: "What you tend to find is that players have personal rivalries when they go back to play against their old clubs. I mean, Paul (Wilkinson) used to be Denby Dale's first team captain and me and Paul England have both played at Cawthorne, so you do get a fair bit of crossover in terms of players and clubs."



Denby Dale

This is a view shared by current Nortonthorpe umpire Norman Mosley: "Because players nowadays move clubs almost every season there's more animosity there. Which isn't necessarily a bad thing, because you're seeing players out there trying to prove a point."

Club secretary and player Roger Littlewood thinks there's a lack of loyalty in the local game. "You tend to find that the good cricketers will go pot-hunting, looking for a club where they think they've got a chance of winning something. With success comes the pressure to carry on performing and you'll get this lack of loyalty, this cliqueish-ness appearing and whether everyone would enjoy playing then is debatable; the success here has come from local lads playing for their local team, not drafting in folks from all over the place."



Cawthorne

Roger's distaste for mercenary players doesn't stop there either, with his experiences as a captain coming to the fore: "The problem is satisfying the aspirations of other players; if you decide to drop a player down the order, even if it's just by one place, they can get upset

because they feel like you've insulted them, that you're suggesting they might not be as good as they think they are. The fact that that might be true is immaterial!"

However, it's good to see Roger hasn't lost his sense of humour over it all: "You get these payers who have a new bat every season, even though the one they have hasn't got a mark on it - which is different to mine because all the marks are on the edge!"

Plus, he's the first to admit his own character as a player is far from flawless, and he has a theory about the competitiveness of cricketers: "I think there's a streak of selfishness in cricketers – for example, bowlers want to bowl all the time. I used to hate being taken off because your natural inclination is that you want just one more over because you think, 'I'm gonna get this beggar, somehow, some way, and if I don't I'm gonna hurt him!'"

Nortonthorpe Cricket Club is like any other in the sense that it can't sustain a team if it refuses to look outside the village boundaries. However, it's a harsh fact of modern sport that loyalty is immaterial and success is paramount, with most players seeing the two as mutually exclusive aspects of local cricket.