

PRIDE AND TRADITION

Junior Cricket by Ian Hodgson

The future of local cricket in Yorkshire relies heavily on youth, who are the future of tomorrow. Without young players coming through and being given a chance, there will be no-one to replace the veterans when they retire and cricket clubs would go downhill.



Traditionally, Yorkshire has produced some very good young players who have even gone on to play for England - in Michael Vaughan, Darren Gough, Craig White, Anthony McGrath, Matthew Hoggard and many more. For further evidence of the strong youth structures in place we can look to the recent clean sweep of success that the county's four youth sides achieved. The Under-13s were the national champions, although their Under-15 counterparts also won a triangular tournament played out with Warwickshire and Surrey. The Under-16s won the Jersey Festival while the Under-17s won the ECB two-day national competition.

Where the county scene is the 'academy' for the Test and ODI sides, it is the clubs that provide the players for the county scene. For the youth set-up to work at a county, it is vital that local clubs are encouraging youngsters to play the sport and giving them a chance to prove themselves. This is where I believe Broad Oak stand out as a cricket club with the amount of young players they have in the first and second teams.

By speaking to many of the older players and ex-players, I get the impression that there is a great sense of pride and tradition, where young lads have come through the youth teams and managed to establish themselves in the seniors. There is no sense of selfishness from the older players about losing their place to a youngster as everyone associated with BOCC, just wants what is best for the club. John Forest signed for another cricket club to make way for younger and better players to prosper - which illustrates this strong sense of community.

It isn't just about the young players making it through; it is crucial that the balance of the team is right. BOCC have made some very astute and promising signings - which they hope can bring success along with the young players. However, it isn't just about the players themselves - the coaches can make all the difference. Young players especially need guidance, both in their mental capacity and confidence and their technical skills.