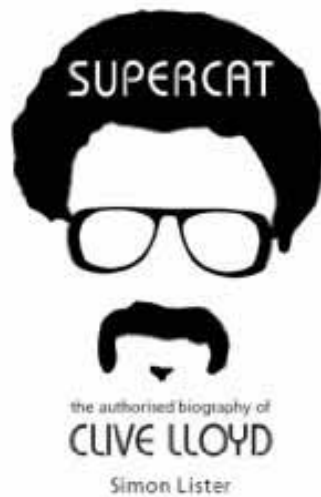


LOOKING FURTHER AFIELD

Overseas Players

By Sam Hollis

This season, the Holmfirth 1st XI will welcome Javed Iqbal to the team. This will supply the squad with experience and a player who prides himself as an all-rounder. In today's highly competitive league, all teams are looking to bring in players of this calibre to improve their squad – and the all-rounder is particularly favoured when pursuing an overseas player. But what are the requirements and motives for this aspect of the game?



Holmfirth's most famous overseas player has recently had an authorised biography penned about him

The debate over overseas players plying their trade in Britain has its roots as far back as 1968, when county cricket allowed two overseas players to play, with one instantly registered player and the other needing to qualify by residence over two years. Fast forward to today's game and teams in the Drakes League are only allowed to sign one overseas player per season. If the player stays for two years, they become a UK-eligible player and the proverbial 'slate' is wiped clean.

Broadly speaking, the issue of overseas players is brought up due to foreign cricketers declaring an interest to move to England to take part in the more competitive lower leagues. Initially, the club will assess what sort of cricketer they are looking for. Naturally, specialist roles are considered in weaker areas of the team. However, with the high costs of the player, it is generally in the clubs' interest to look for an all-rounder to improve all aspects of the team. Alternatively, British cricket clubs approach British-based agents who provide

an extensive list of players based around the world who are interested in coming to the country, and more specifically, the Drakes League.

To qualify to play in this country, a player must meet certain requirements. These are split into two groups, EU players and Non-EU players. Non-EU players, like Iqbal, must sign a contract which includes their specific duties, a detailed remuneration package and details of club and league disciplinary procedures. A person may play as a non-EU player if he can qualify for entry into the UK, or is currently a resident in the UK, and in either case in possession of a UK visa in accordance with the current legislation set by the UK Border Agency.

Somewhat precariously, EU players have to abide by particularly loose regulations. All a person has to do is prove that they were born in the EU (with a legitimate birth certificate), or that their parents were born within the EU. If they do not match either of these requirements, like the non-EU player applying for residency in the UK, an EU player simply has to prove they have been living within the EU for two years.

Once these formalities are taken care of, the player is free to play in Britain. But what are the issues surrounding importing foreign talent?

Some critics of this method argue that overseas players deprive homegrown players of opportunities, therefore limiting choice for the England selectors and subsequently having a detrimental effect on the national side. Another argument suggests that with the current financial climate, overseas players are too great a drain on resources, and clubs would be better off looking to promising youngsters.

Internally, communication problems are obviously an issue for players and teammates alike. Two different cultures coming together in a short amount of time can have a harmful effect. Often clubs will arrange the overseas player's accommodation and look for employment for them. This type of work also helps the transfer process become more prompt.

The impact of overseas players within the Drakes League cannot be underestimated. One hopes that Holmfirth's own exports succeed. Undoubtedly, such signings show a high sense of ambition, and while the club supports the great work in youth development, reaching a balance between local talent and true professionalism can unquestionably only bring a positive outcome.