

International rugby stars give cricket a go at pavilion opening

Rams and Bulls all set to lock horns

NORTHOWRAM Hedge Top are making two cup final appearances this season but the highlight of their year promises to come in a less serious contest on Sunday.

The Halifax League top flight outfit, whose seconds are in the Crossley Shield final and thirds were beaten by Blackley in Courier Cup final, mark the opening of their extended pavilion with a match against Bradford Bulls (2.0).

A whole host of international players will be swapping the oval ball for a small red one with the likes of Robbie Paul, Jimmy Lowes, Leslie Vainokola and Leon Price preparing to don their whites.

Trinity Insurance Halifax League

A charity match between Northowram and the Bulls at Brighouse CC two years ago attracted an estimated 2,000 people and the Hedge Top club are hoping for another bumper crowd at mark the completion of their £40,000 building project.

First team bowler Andrew Gardner, winner of the league averages in 1988, is the link with Bradford Bulls through his business travel company based at Odsal.

He will be part of a host team made up of key figures in the pavilion development project and the opposition will include Aussie Michael Withers, who plays full-back for the Bulls and is also a pretty useful cricketer all-rounder for Northowram when his rugby league commitments allow.

Club president Harry Andrew

and one of the Bulls stars will probably open the pavilion before a match which Gardner expects to be light-hearted rather than ultra-competitive.

It would come as no surprise if Bradford batted first and Gardner said: "There will be a maximum of six overs per bowler and batsmen must retire at 30. We have said that the Bulls players can bat twice if necessary to try to make sure they use up their 40 overs."

Gardner said the event was being billed as a family fun day with children's entertainment, an all-day barbecue, tombola, fireworks display, tug of war involving the Bulls and the chance for spectators to bowl at the rugby players. The Bulls Roadshow will also be there. Admission is £2 for adults and 50p for children.

The weekend's first action at

the Hedge Top Lane club involves Northowram and SBCI in Section A tomorrow.

Gardner believes a top three finish is a realistic target for the team with eight Section A matches to go.

The Rams are fifth behind established big guns Copley, Booth, Warley and Triangle. They have lost to all four sides above them, conceded a double to Sowerby and beaten everyone else.

The title combatants aside, Gardner believes Northowram are "best of the rest" and could have a say in the outcome of the championship over the closing weeks.

"It we can maintain our good run of form and believe in ourselves there is no reason why we can't beat the likes of Warley and Copley," he said.

Northowram have lost the services of all-rounder Shaid Rashid, who has returned to Pakistan for six months, and have taken the opportunity to blood youngsters Neil Harvey and Matthew Reed in the first team.

Richard Leach and Ben Harvey have made useful runs recently for the Ian Stocks-led side while Martin Kirkbride has made a successful return to the first team.

Left armer Gardner, who can bowl seam or spin, is the leading wicket-taker while the vastly experienced Phil Taylor, a former East Bierley captain, has also made his mark with the ball.

SUNDAY'S TEAMS - BRADFORD BULLS: Jimmy Lowes, Joe Vagena, Robbie Paul, Leslie Vainokola, Leon Pryce, Richard Moore, Michael Withers, Daryl Shellford, Tevita Vaikona, Lee Radford, Brian McDermott.

NORTHOWRAM HEDGE TOP: Bruce Deadman, Andrew Gardner, Richard Leach, Steve Parkinson, Mark Oldman, Tony Oldman, Peter Barber, Martin Reed, David Green, Kenny Dawson, Stefan Litjens, Paul Gravenor.