

Best friend tried to give him kiss of life

Cricketer, 29, died after heart attack

A 29-YEAR-OLD cricketer died of a heart attack after hitting 98 runs for his team.

Mr Richard David Smith, of Queensbury Cricket Club, was found collapsed in clubhouse toilets after retiring at the interval when he became unwell.

Stunned team-mates abandoned the game against Bridgeholme Cricket Club at its ground in Eastwood, Todmorden, at 6.44 pm on Saturday, and rushed to help Mr Smith when he was discovered by a spectator.

Queensbury club captain Philip Sharples and Mr Smith's best friend James Elsworth, who was best man at his wedding in September, tried to give him the kiss of life before paramedics arrived.

By Jon Robinson

Mr Smith, of Wharnccliffe Drive, Eccleshill, Bradford, known to his teammates as R.D. Smith, was taken to Calderdale Royal Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

A West Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance Service spokeswoman confirmed he was taken to hospital after suffering a suspected heart attack.

Mr Smith's family, friends, team mates and cricket officials were today in shock and trying to come to terms with the death.

"It is a horrible, horrible tragedy. He was a wonderful, kind and generous man," said Mr Sharples.

"He was full of life and had a great sense of humour and was a damn fine cricketer. The club's thoughts are with his wife Victoria and his family."

Richard and Victoria did not have any children.

Club chairman Jack Ryder, who came on as a substitute to field in his place, said everyone was shocked.

He said Richard's father had died in his 40s, when he was nine.

Club secretary Mr Neil Myers said Richard felt unwell and they thought it was no more than the heat and the lack of water.

But with 18 overs of Bridgeholme's innings remaining, spectator Mrs Karen Moore rushed out of the clubhouse to raise the alarm after finding him in the women's toilets.

"He was a fairly quiet, unassuming lad. He was very popular with his teammates and he had become a stalwart of the club since it was formed and was vice-captain of the first team," said Mr Myers.

"I think, in the few years that he had played in the Halifax Cricket League in the Second Division, he had become known as quite a hard-hitting, left-handed batsman."

Mr Smith had hit 98 runs during the game, including eight sixes and nine fours, to put his team on 235 for seven. Bridgeholme were on 102 for eight when the game was abandoned.

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