

Skipper predicts a bright future

LIVING in the shadow of Mike Bocarro can be a character building (or character destroying) experience.

Skelmanthorpe know that only too well.

The irrepressible Bocarro joined Skelmanthorpe when they became additions to the Huddersfield League in 1987. He was paid to take them up and he achieved just that.

Last season was a more testing time with Skelmanthorpe flirting with relegation for most of the season and the former Honley skipper found things tough.

And when things got tough, so did Bocarro.

Youngsters and old hands alike felt intimidated as a raging Bocarro was demanding perfection and nothing less. There were no quarters given.

One man who not only refused to buckle under the formidable man's presence, but actually followed him around the league, was Darren Hinchliffe.

And the 24-year-old's reward for sticking with Skelmanthorpe when there was a real temptation to go elsewhere is the 1989 captaincy.

No newcomer

Hinchliffe's first year in charge has seen his side rocket into the top half of Section "A" and cruise comfortably into the last eight of the Sykes Cup.

The sunlight is beginning to filter through where Bocarro's dynasty had left something of a cloud.

But despite Hinchliffe's tender years, he is no newcomer to big-time cricket.

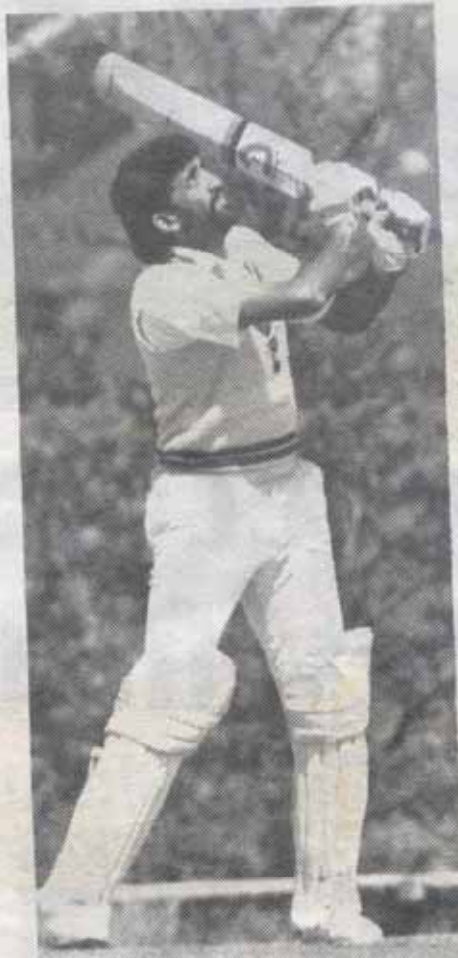
At Honley he played in three Sykes Cup finals (all with Bocarro) finishing up a winner against Primrose Hill in 1982 at only 17 years old.

His last appearance in a cup final was in the famous final against Broad Oak which went on for ever and a day and Bocarro, for reasons probably only known to himself, finished up with a broken hand.

Hinchliffe and brother Jamie then followed in Bocarro's slipstream to Skelmanthorpe.

And Bocarro's stint with the former Central Leaguers certainly left its mark on their new captain.

"He was a real guy in the changing room but on the field he used to embarrass so many people," he said. "We have got a lot of youngsters here but



Shahid Mahboob looks towards the heavens following the trail of another mighty blow at Kirkburton on Sunday. Sadly, his shot achieved more height than length and he was picked up at long-on by Yuri Matischen. Picture: JULIAN HUGHES

they just weren't coming through because he was always getting on their backs.

"The atmosphere is a lot better now. "But Bocarro is still one of the best players I have ever seen and he was really keen to play in the Huddersfield League this year because it would have been his 20th season."

It has to be pointed out that Hinch-

Huddersfield League CRICKET

Stephen Davies

liffe is no angel. As he admits: "I have got a bad temper but I don't show it on the field. I could be really nasty if I wanted to."

Hinchliffe has also to overcome the fact that several of his teammates—the likes of Mick Saville, Geoff Crompton and John Murphy—have considerably more experience.

He is also in charge of the highly volatile Shahid Mahboob, perhaps the most explosive cricketer in the league.

Mahboob, perhaps under Bocarro's influence, was a highly-charged cricketer last year but still put up tremendous performances with his lively pace bowling and monumental hitting.

Hard tracks

This year, however, other than a half century in only 19 balls against Kirkheaton, he has missed out with the bat.

Hinchliffe cannot explain Mahboob's mysterious batting demise.

"The best wickets have gone for him. He likes good hard tracks that he can get forward on and the best of those have gone. He has missed out," Hinchliffe said.

The captain, who made his debut for the league side in their first round Yorkshire Leagues Knockout tie away to South Riding, is confident Skelmanthorpe can build on their outstanding start.

But he realises that with the consistent strengths of Holmfirth and Elland, the league title may be out of reach this year.

"We have got a really good chance in the Sykes Cup," said the captain. "It's a big advantage for us playing Holmfirth at home. We are good enough to beat any side."

The controversies of the past couple of seasons are now nothing but a dim memory.

In pure statistics, Mike Bocarro's legacy was a great one. But now Skelmanthorpe have left the warrior behind—and the future looks bright.