

KP, THE POTTERS, AND A £100 BET!

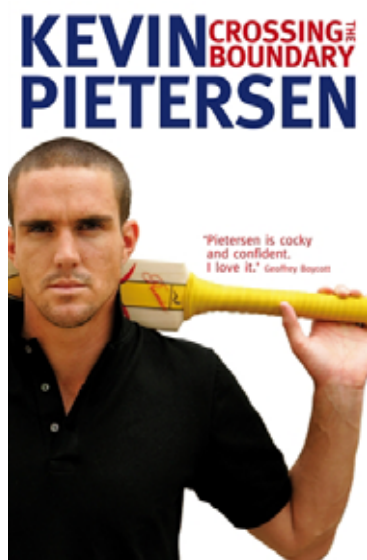
Player Profile - Craig Taylor by Sam Smith

Blackley's explosive middle-order batsman Craig Taylor has set his sights on promotion and a 1,000 runs as his aims for the forthcoming 2008 season.

The former Copley captain joined Blackley last year and had an exceptional first season, scoring 792 runs at an average of just over 56, including a magnificent unbeaten 108 in the Parish Cup. Taylor is hoping he can carry forward his excellent form from the last campaign and help fire Blackley into the top division of the Halifax League this time around.

"The big aim this year is to get promoted. Forget about the Parish Cup - the priority is the League," said Taylor.

His aggressive style and confident swagger could lead onlookers into making comparisons with England star Kevin Pietersen. Taylor admits he has modelled his game on expansive strokemakers such as the flamboyant South-African born batting ace.



He said, "I've always wanted to bat like somebody. I'm trying to bat a bit like Pietersen at the moment. I like to be aggressive and try to get on top of bowlers and force them to change their pace and length."

"Cat", as he is known to teammates, is an influential figure at Blackley and this year he has the added responsibility of the vice-captaincy and fulfilling the role of

wicket-keeper batsman. Taylor is optimistic about the upcoming season and is hoping his experience can help bring the best out of the youngsters. "As one of the older players in the team I feel it's my job to help bring the younger lads into the team, keep their confidence up, and generally make sure everyone is enjoying themselves," said Taylor.

The fiery right-hander was introduced to the game of cricket at the age of 12 and went on to play for Halifax League teams Kings Cross and Copley for a combined total of 16 years, before moving to Blackley in 2007. Taylor is also an avid football follower and a keen supporter of Championship team Stoke City. (I'm sure he is delighted how the current season has panned out so far for the table-topping Potters).

Taylor has become a key component of the Blackley side and his never-say-die attitude and winning mentality will be crucial in the club's 2008 promotion push. Although Taylor has a steely determination to win matches, he refuses to neglect the importance of enjoying the game. "I'd say I'm a jolly character and play with my heart on my sleeve. I like to have fun on the field and not take it too seriously but I like to win as well."

He is eagerly anticipating the start of the new campaign and will no doubt be relishing the chance to show off his batting prowess in the late-April Twenty20 Cup competition. He will also be spurred on by an extra financial incentive and if all goes to plan he will finish the season top of the batting charts and a richer man. Taylor revealed, "I've actually got a bet on with my Dad. If I score a 1,000 runs then he will give me £100. So that's definitely something to aim towards!"