

# CLECKHEATON CRICKET CLUB

## Seven Years of 1st Division Cricket

### 1999

The 1999 Season, our first back in the 1st Division was a struggle from the very first match but we looked like finishing in a mid table position until our form deserted us in the latter half of the year. We did, however, maintain our Division One status, but only just. The point taken from the season's last match against Yorkshire Bank left us equal on points with local rivals Spen Victoria, and only the extra win gained by us pushed our neighbours into the lower division. We struggled to find consistency throughout the team, but our season was not without some outstanding performances both with bat and bowl. The season's highlight was captain Chris Pickles' achievement in recording 1000 Bradford League runs for a record breaking fifth time. Before the season had begun both he and Iqbal Khan had each performed the feat four times.

Kanwaljeet Singh, an experienced Indian off spin bowler, joined us a month into the season, an introduction which in the final analysis made the difference between us staying up and making a quick return to the division which we had so joyously left twelve months earlier. His figures in the final averages didn't look startling, but he managed very effectively to stifle some of the League's very best batsmen. His performance against Baildon when he finished with figures of 19-overs, 13-maidens, 10-runs, 5-wickets was most definitely the highlight of his season, but stints every bit as effective against Spen Victoria, Bradford & Bingley, and Undercliffe twice gained us valuable points on each occasion.

A young man called Andrew Gale really hit the big time. Joining us the previous year as a promising young cricketer he was playing regular first team cricket by last season's close. Not only did he progress from the junior ranks to play 2nd and then 1st team cricket but to Yorkshire and from there to the heady heights of England schoolboy cricket where he was certainly not overawed as he marked his elevation with a "ton" on debut.

### 2000

With Chris Pickles still at the helm we hoped that the 2000 season (our 25th in Bradford League cricket) would be the season in which we finally consolidated ourselves as a 1st Division side. Actually we did better than we could have ever hoped, finishing in 3rd place behind Pudsey Congs and Bradford & Bingley. It was the first time since joining the Bradford League that the Club had managed to gain a third successive season in Division One.

We had been joined at the beginning of the season by Paul Booth from Meltham and Mark Gill from Windhill, and we started the season with what we considered to be the best spin bowler and the best wicket keeper in the League. Paul captured 64 wickets at an average of 14.14 each, and but for injury mid season, which forced him to miss six games, he would most certainly have taken more wickets than any other league bowler. Mark finished the season with 31 victims, 18 of which were stumpings, and scored 594 runs at an average 28.29. Chris Pickles and Paul Winrow both made major contributions with the bat whilst the latter represented the Bradford League in the Yorkshire Leagues' Knockout Trophy where in the final he won the "man-of-the-match" award with fine performances with both bat and ball.

### 2001

2001 was a disappointing year after what had been achieved the previous season. We finally finished just one place above a relegation spot although we did have some rewarding performances. On the batting front Mark Gill scored 1035 runs at an average of 45.04, and Paul Winrow totalled 828 at 33.12. South African Derek Brand's contribution was 643 runs (42.87 runs per wicket), and newcomer Chris Siddall managed 494 runs at an average of 32.29. In all four batsmen scored centuries with Paul Winrow's 124 the highest. Paul Booth was again our outstanding bowler capturing 61 wickets at 16.97 runs each, but it was Andy Yates with 40 wickets at 16.73 each who topped the averages. We certainly missed Chris Pickles who due to other commitments was unable to play more than a handful of matches, and at the end of the season we were all deeply disappointed to learn of his decision to retire from Bradford League Cricket.

## 2002

Going into the 2002 season, we held hopes of a relatively successful year although on the playing front we had lost three key members of our 2001 squad. Paul Winrow decided to join Huddersfield League Barkisland, the Club where his father is chairman, and Paul Booth rejoined his old club Meltham taking Andy Yates with him. Chris Pickles finally announced his retirement, and it was decided not to re-appoint South African Derek Brand who had left early due to personal reasons at home.

The new players we had appointed seemed to fit the bill. In fact we appeared to have a stronger squad than the previous season. A new captain, Steve Titchard, had joined us straight from County Cricket where he had spent ten years with Lancashire and two with Derbyshire. He was expected to open the batting with Mark Gill who had decided to stay with us after turning down more lucrative offers from other clubs. Faisal Irfan, a 23 year old 6ft 8ins 17-stone Pakistan fast bowler had agreed to join us and "old boy". James Stansfield had returned to the fold after a couple of years at Brighouse. Faisal had topped the Pakistan 4-day Bowling Averages the previous season and it was hoped that the pair would form a formidable partnership. Youngsters Chris Brice and Richard Pyrah had joined from the Yorkshire Academy. Chris, a left arm spinner, and Richard, an earlier order batsman and medium pace swing bowler had both gained experience playing for the YCB and Yorks 2nd Eleven teams.

Unfortunately, this optimism was short-lived as circumstances quickly began to decimate our squad. James Stansfield after playing the opening match broke his leg playing for Bradford Park Avenue and was lost to us for most of the season. Chris Siddall started the season magnificently with 238 runs in his first five innings (including 2 centuries) before tearing his groin and bringing his season to a premature end. Fast bowler and hard hitter Adam Swallow had played just two matches before he had to miss a further seven due to a serious knee injury that threatened to keep him out for the remainder of the season. He did, against medical advice, return to play as a batsman only, but he was unable to bowl again until the last month of the season.

With our new skipper Steve Titchard unfortunately unable to discover any significant batting form and with a team patently short of strength in both batting and bowling we reached the half season with just 19 points. With normally around 50 points required to reach safety the very serious danger of relegation loomed.

The second half was certainly better than the first, but until the help of the first slice of good fortune we had enjoyed all season, relegation still seemed inevitable. During late July overtures were made to all clubs by Farsley asking for support in forcing an EGM to vote on a proposal to change the number of clubs being relegated from three to one. They were concerned firstly about their and other club's loss of revenue through the lack of home fixtures, and secondly that there were so many teams in the 2nd Division that they were unable to play each other twice. With our and other team's support the requested EGM took place and by the smallest of margins the rule change was carried. Cleckheaton now only needed to stay clear of the bottom spot to survive which they duly did.

In a season where our resources were severely stretched, the available players led by example, and in the end they were only one win away from clawing out of the bottom three. Mark Gill scored 766 runs at an average of 47.88, Richard Pyrah, who was selected the Bradford League's "Young Player of the Year", totalled 717 runs at 39.83 per innings, and Adam Swallow was only 4 runs short of making the List of Averages, scoring 296 runs at 32.89. Steve Titchard's improving form saw him end the season on 352 runs. Including Cup matches Mark's final tally was 875, Richard's 801, and Steve's 520, in the circumstances all highly creditable performances. Both Faisal Irfan and Chris Brice fulfilled their promise. In his first season in England Faisal captured 42 wickets at 20.33 runs each. He has been retained for the 2003 season when it is hoped he will perform even better. Chris's contribution was 38 wickets at 19.39.

Unfortunately probably due to our disappointing season we lost more players at the end of the year than we would have liked. Mark Gill left us to go to Undercliffe. Richard Pyrah and Chris Brice both decided to leave us for Woodlands. Adam Swallow after many years of service to the club, joined 2nd Division side Bradford & Bingley, and Steve Titchard having joined the Lancs Academy as a coach was refused permission to play "over the border". In hindsight 2002 was a season to forget . . . . . And so to season 2003 with hope !!

## 2004

And so to 2004 with optimism. Austin was still with us and with a useful set of players. Of last season's players only Chris Siddall, James Stansfield and Iftexhar Ahmed had left, but new players had come along including Ismael Dawood from Hanging Heaton, brothers Sarfaraaz and Uzair Mahomed from Bradford & Bingley, left arm pace bowler Craig Wiseman from the Yorkshire Academy, and John Cairns from Lancashire League club Haslingden.

We finally thought that we had put all the pieces of the jigsaw in the right places, and early season form seemed to echo our hopes. At one stage we looked almost unbeatable, despite an early season trouncing by Spen.

In beating Baildon on the 8th of May, whilst Pudsey Congs were rained off, we moved into top spot of the League, and a further four pointer against Undercliffe the following day cemented our position at the top. We continued to win games until the end of May when the wheels came off at Spring Bank against both Bankfoot and Hanging Heaton, but we recovered the following week to hand out a rare defeat to Pudsey Congs.

We were still very much in the title race as July dawned, winning some games and losing others; but as July gave way to August, three body blows virtually put paid to any title pretensions we were harbouring. Andrew Gale following some good 2nd's performances found himself in Yorkshire's 1st team; and trying to overcome their wicket-keeping crisis, Ishy Dawood was also called upon. Whilst it was extremely good news for the players concerned, and they went with our best wishes, it certainly dented our ambitions. At the same time skipper Ian Austin was injured, and from the 7th August to the end of the season was only able to bowl a further 32 overs.



In a difficult run-in we conceded 297 runs against Baildon, 299 runs against Idle, 287 runs against Hanging Heaton, 286 runs against Pudsey Congs, and 312 runs against Woodlands, as our depleted young bowling attack found problems in containing quality batsmen. On the debit side, Idle's 299 was not enough to give them a victory as Austin took all the points with an undefeated 146. In an opposite vein, Pudsey Congs overhauled our total of 283 for 1. In this match Austin again batting, but not bowling, scored the League's highest total of the season, a score of 163 not out. Even though the Congs won, it was disappointing for their two leading batsmen on the day, both Andy Bethel and Andrew Bairstow being dismissed for 98 by Sarfaraaz Mahomed.

In the end, the team had to settle for 6th place in the League, a full 42 points behind eventual winners Pudsey Congs, but on the individual front we had a remarkable season with a table full of trophies at the League Dinner in November. Andrew Gale was named Bradford League "Young Player of the Year", and Austin again won the Sir Learie Constantine "All Rounders" Trophy he had collected the previous year along with the W H Foster Jubilee Trophy for best average, and the Pennine Trophy for the season's highest individual score. Youngsters Adam Patel (728 runs at 33.09) and Sarfaraaz Mahomed (433 runs at 30.93) completed a quartet of Cleckheaton players who finished high in the League's Batting Averages.



However, pride of place, at the end of the season, must go to stalwart Keith Johnstone. He was presented with the Bradford League's most prestigious award, the "Sir Leonard Hutton

Trophy" presented to a person who has rendered valuable service to Bradford League cricket and has displayed outstanding qualities of leadership and personality.

## 2005

Enforced changes had to be made for Cleckheaton's lineup for the 2005 season. After two seasons at the helm Lancastrian Ian Austin had decided to leave to become Director of Cricket at St. Annes in the Northern Premier League, and another Lancashire county cricketer took his place, but this was Yorkshireman John Wood, the former Durham and Lancashire journeyman with ten years experience on the county circuit. Whilst playing with Lancashire he had turned out for Spen Victoria when available, and due to his connections brought along to Cleckheaton both his brother Ian and Kez Ahmed from the Spen club. Overseas man Faisal Irfan, after three years with the club, had decided to join Pudsey St Lawrence, but was gained an able replacement with an experienced Indian off-spinner by the name of Faisal Shaikh who was to perform admirably throughout the season. Wicketkeeper Anthony Daniels, called up by the Yorkshire Academy was replaced by Richard Soulsby from Morley, who was the previous season's leading 2nd Division keeper. Excepting John Cairns who had also returned to Lancashire, the rest of the previous season's team was still in place. A good season was in prospect which is what it turned out to be...



In the cups, we enjoyed mixed fortunes. The club, having re-entered the Heavy Woollen Cup, fought their way to the semi-final before falling to eventual winners Barnsley, whilst after having the luxury of a bye in the 1st round of the Priestley Cup they were surprisingly knocked out by 2nd

division Manningham Mills.

On the league front steady progress was made throughout the season with some encouraging scalps being taken along the way. We came out on top in both of our matches against Pudsey St Lawrence, and after our first game against the Congs was rained off we took four points from them after reducing their batting to 57 for 7. Only East Bierley who took 12 points from us, and Saltaire who gained 10, got the better of us over two games. We were in touch with the leaders for most of the campaign, and it shows the extent of our current ambitions that the club was a little disappointed at eventually finishing fifth.

Andrew Gale had his best Bradford League season yet, scoring 1107 runs at an average of 52.71 per innings, but only he, skipper John Wood, and Adam Patel appeared in the list of batting averages. The runs scored by Andrew won him the "Tebro Trophy" for the most runs scored during the season by either 1st or 2nd division players. Two of our bowlers, John Wood (44 wickets at 15.48) and Faisal Shaikh (52 wickets at 16.02) were in the top seven in the bowling averages, and young Richard Soulsby finished second in the wicket keeping list with 31 victims.



**IT'S FINALLY ARRIVED**  
at CLECKHEATON C.C.

**AUGUST 14**  
**is D-DAY!**

**STARTS**  
10.30am

**LOTS OF OTHER ATTRACTIONS**

**COME AND JOIN IN ALL THE FUN AT CLECKHEATON C.C., MOOREND**



One of the highlights of the season was being able to bring in one of Yorkshire's most promising batsmen Joe Sayers. Whilst with us his influence spread throughout the team and it was a privilege to having him playing in our side; but the real focal point was the staging of our own 20-twenty competition, the "Surridge Challenge Trophy" which hopefully will become a yearly event. Much press coverage was given to the event which proved a huge success. Players and spectators alike had a wonderful day.

The competition between Cleckheaton Crusaders, East Bierley Eagles, Morley Marauders, and Spen Victoria Sharks all wearing coloured clothing sponsored by Gaggia was keenly contested with the Eagles defeating the Crusaders in the final.