

## SOME THOUGHTS FROM OUR PROFESSIONAL

1974 sees Almondbury Cricket Club celebrate its centenary year, and we hope to mark this milestone in the Club's history by gaining promotion which we so narrowly missed last season. We must be in with a good chance. The team has been strengthened for the new season ahead, and with some of the younger players showing a lot of promise, the future looks really bright.

Promotion, however cannot be achieved without a strong and interested committee, and the Almondbury Committee has shown an unparalleled interest and enthusiasm both for the game and its players. Promotion in this their centenary year, would be a fitting and just reward for their efforts off the field.

During the last seven years I have played in Yorkshire's major leagues – the Yorkshire League, Council, both divisions of the Bradford League, and more recently both sections of the Huddersfield League, so as an 'Outsider' I would like to make a few personal observations about the League and its players.

The League's biggest drawback is the poor condition of some of the wickets. Cricketers, I am sure, improve on better pitches. Poor wickets also hinder the progress and potential of the younger players. A poor wicket has a more adverse effect upon a batsman than a bowler and one wonders how some of the bowlers in our league would fare on better wickets. Considering the unpredictable English climate, it is always a source of amazement to me that so much cricket is played in one season. This must apply more so to leagues like the Huddersfield League. The weather, incidentally, must be one of the reasons why we have so many "green tops". All the same, I think more grass could be taken off many of the league pitches.

As an outsider, one of the first things to strike me was the character, warmth and rare dry humour which runs throughout the league. These are some of the main ingredients which help to make the league one of the most enjoyable to play in. The social side of the game in this league is also difficult to match, with players, officials and supporters from both sides meeting after the game for a friendly drink and the traditional "post mortem". In this league, no-one harbours a grudge once the game is over. A batsman can expect at best, to be called unprintable names, and at worst to be decapitated by an uncompromising bowler. But after the game any hostility, better described as competitiveness, is drowned in the ale. The same players who have battled so fiercely on the field to draw first blood, drink and swap stories off it. This is one aspect of the game to be cherished, as in some leagues this does not always happen.

Finally, the aim in our centenary year is to gain promotion by playing positive and we hope, entertaining cricket.

Brian Rudkin.