

## **INSPIRED TEAM EFFORT SEES LILIES ADVANCE**

**HEAVY WOOLLEN CUP, APRIL 2007**

**GOLCAR V EAST BIERLEY**

**By Peter Redding**

Excitement began building as the draw for the Heavy Woollen Cup was made; the Lilies were paired with East Bierley for their first meeting since their Champion of Champions final encounter 25 years ago. Golcar were looking to even the score having lost in a high-scoring encounter and the meeting at Swallow Lane gave them the chance to do just that.

Familiar early-season conditions greeted the encounter with the weather not really able to make its mind up. Steve Whitwam skippered the home side, deputising for Ashley Pamment who had suffered a broken finger playing football. He made a good start to proceedings by calling correctly at the toss and electing to bat on a good batting wicket. The strategy was clear, to put runs on the board and then put pressure on the visitors with the three frontline spinners.



**The venue**

Openers Whitwam and James Sykes, making his cup debut for the Lilies, made a confident start as the visiting attack struggled with their line, spraying the ball down both sides of the wicket. The partnership was calculated and clinical as both openers set about settling in and building a platform. They played relatively risk-free cricket in the early overs, pouncing on the bad ball when it arrived. The considerable home support were expecting a tough game given the competitive nature of the Bradford League, where the visitors hailed from. The opening partnership soon dispelled the early nerves.

Both players began taking more chances once they had settled in. Whitwam began taking the aerial route, while Sykes scored the majority of his runs along the deck scoring boundaries off good deliveries as well as the bad ones. The visiting bowlers were clearly riled as the extras count continued to rise. The Lilies' opening partnership reached 100 to the delight of the Swallow Lane faithful, who enjoyed the stand even more given that they had seen their side dismissed for just 115 in the premier division opener against Delph and Dobcross 24 hours earlier.

Whitwam was eventually dismissed having scored a fluent 86, the highlight being an effortless lofted six over cover. There were a few nerves when James Sykes, who had put on 164 with the captain, was dismissed shortly after. The two new batsmen at the crease needed to consolidate on the opening stand, otherwise the Golcar total wouldn't have reached the level it should have.

The second wicket brought Darren Robinson to the crease who, with Australian star Mitchell O'Connor, put impetus back into the innings. O'Connor fell just short of a quickfire half-century but Robinson motored on, taking advantage of the short leg-side boundary by hitting sixes off consecutive balls to eventually finish on 60 not out. The last five overs yielded over 50 runs and the home side finished on an imposing total of 309 for 3.

The East Bierley chase was always going to be difficult, despite the presence of Gavin Hamilton, the former Yorkshire and England all-rounder who has also played in the World Cup for Scotland. The target was over a run a ball from the off. The second part of the home side's masterplan would now be put into operation as the spinners were introduced into the attack. It was a strategy that was almost enforced upon the Lilies given that seam bowler Adam France had broken down the previous day in the match against Delph and Dobcross.

It didn't take long for the plan to bear fruit as Steve Whitwam and Gary Coleman picked up early wickets. Seam bowler Darren Robinson also got his name in the wickets column as the visitors were reduced to 28 for 3. Hamilton provided the main source of hope for the chase but when he was caught at slip by captain Steve Whitwam the game looked up. The Lilies continued to squeeze with the spin of Coleman, Witwam and new Italian signing Paolo Girardi. Then came a potentially decisive moment as Drummond, on 35, survived a difficult stumping chance off leg- spinner Paolo Girardi, whose misery was compounded when his next three balls were smeared for 14 runs.

Drummond proceeded to take advantage of his slice of fortune, smashing some big sixes on the leg-side, finding the gardens of the nearby residents on numerous occasions. Wickets were falling at the other end but he was showing the kind of form which could bring the visitors a shock victory, reaching a belligerent hundred with one of the few singles of his innings. A rate of 10 an over was required from the last 11 with three wickets still standing. There was anxiety from the Lilies faithful as Drummond farmed the strike and continued to pepper the nearby houses.

The big breakthrough came as a huge relief. Gareth Pearson, who had been drafted in for the injured Adam France, lured Drummond into a mistimed lofted drive and Mitchell O'Connor running in from square-leg took a well judged catch, displaying the calmness under pressure we've come to expect from Australian cricketers. Pearson then cleaned up the tail to finish with impressive figures of 3 for 28, staking a claim for a regular first-team place. Gary Coleman finished with 3 for 26, the best of the bowling figures. East Bierley were bundled out for 213 as the home side advanced, winning by 96 runs and leaving the Swallow Lane faithful dreaming of another cup run.

### **Scorecard**

**Golcar 309 for 3 (S Whitwam 86, J Sykes 68, D Robinson 60 not out, M O'Connor 41)**

**East Bierley 213 (P Drummond 118; G Coleman 3 for 26, G Pearson 3 for 28)**

**Golcar win by 96 runs**