

Peter Dibb - Playing through the Test of Time

Many cricketers would think they are doing well to still be playing at a fair standard in their 40's, some would be ecstatic to still be playing in their 50's, but to still be playing at 72? Surely that isn't possible for any cricketer? Not if you're Peter Dibb, the Second XI Captain at Honley Cricket Club. Peter Dibb began his 58<sup>th</sup> season as a local league cricketer in 2005 and he is still performing consistently taking his wickets at an average of a shade under 21 with his right arm in swing.

Peter Dibb made his debut for Honley during the 1948 season at the age of 14. 1948 is of course a famous year for cricket fans, it was the year that Don Bradman's invincibles were ruling the roost in England. This gives you some idea of the longevity of Peter Dibb's career. Peter Dibb's hero growing up was a certain Yorkshire batsman, he says "I used to like watching Len Hutton bat." Like Len Hutton, Peter Dibb spent a large proportion of his career opening the batting. Peter Dibb or "Dibby", as he is known to his teammates describes himself as an "all rounder" and few can argue when they are presented with his career statistics. Like most cricketers Peter Dibb knows his career statistics off by heart and when I asked him how many wickets he has taken throughout his career, his reply was almost instantaneous after a quick consultation with the famous book in which records his statistics after each match. The answer? "2,138 wickets." This is a figure that is hard to believe. Not many players in the history of first class cricket have taken this many wickets. Peter Dibb is known for being a miserly bowler even now and Honley Club Secretary Tim Hirst recalls that "Dibby once bowled a spell of about 12

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overs that contained only one scoring shot,” this is a bowling spell that Glenn McGrath would surely be proud of. Peter Dibb has also scored 12,777 runs during his career and like a true all rounder his batting average is higher than his bowling average. Peter Dibb's highest score with the bat is 84 and his best bowling figures are 8 for 13 against Elland in 1968.

Peter Dibb has played for a number of clubs during his 58 year career, turning out for Lascelles Hall, Dalton, Slathwaite, Paddock, Marsden, Shepley and Hall Bower. This isn't unusual for a local league cricketer in Yorkshire. There is a transfer system that almost mirrors that of professional football in the way that players move to and from clubs. Peter Dibb is back at Honley now and at the age of 72 is still the Captain of the Second XI and was their leading bowler in 2005.

Peter Dibb has had many successes during his long career as I found out when I asked him for his career highlights, “My career highlights are winning Section A of the Huddersfield and District League, winning the Sykes Cup in 1961 and 1966 with Lascelles Hall and winning three Paddock Shields as Captain of Honley's Second XI from 2001 to 2003.” He replied.

Over the course of a 58 year career it is obvious that Peter Dibb has seen lots of changes at Honley Cricket Club and also changes to the way that local league cricket is played in Huddersfield. The facilities at Honley have changed and Peter Dibb says that the pitches have been the one thing that has changed the most. “The pitches have been a lot better since the 1970's

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and this is mainly because the groundsman, at the time, John Sanderson used to put soil into the wickets. He had seen and played in local league cricket in the South of England and the wickets there were generally a lot better. He picked up a lot of the tips for preparing pitches while he was there and he started using these methods up here. Pitches up here used to be under prepared and uncovered." Dobb also says that "the facilities are treated a lot better now."

Peter Dobb has also seen a lot of changes take place in the league over the years. The over rates have often got worse and Peter Dobb says that the league needs to "improve over rates." The amount of sledging in the game has also increased in local league cricket in recent years. There "wasn't much sledging in the game" when Peter Dobb started his career and this perhaps illustrates the fact that sledging has only come into the game recently and this has often been highlighted in professional and in particular International cricket. Peter Dobb says that "the trend has since worked its way down into local league cricket and this has been the reason for the increase in sledging in recent years." During his career Peter Dobb has also seen the length of the league matches changed from 45 overs to 50, this change took place in 1984. The Huddersfield and District League has also changed a lot in recent times with a number of clubs joining from further away. Teams from Greater Manchester such as Micklehurst and Delph and Dobcross, the league is no longer restricted to just Huddersfield teams.

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Peter Dibb has played against a number of famous players during his time as a local league cricketer from both home and abroad. He has played against former England batsman Allan Lamb, Pakistani seamer Fazal Mahmood, West Indian cricketer Sonny Rahmaddin, England seamer Jonny Wardell, New Zealand batsman Matthew Horne and South African batsman Andrew Hudson. Of these players Peter Dibb dismissed Allan Lamb and Andrew Hudson, both of whom played a number of test matches for their respective countries. Peter Dibb says that "Fred Jakeman is the best player I played with." Jakeman played county cricket for both Yorkshire and Northants

The pinnacle of Peter Dibb's career was when he took part in Yorkshire nets during the 1950's. Peter Dibb also says "I could have had trials for Derbyshire but I didn't see that there was a career in it at the time." This shows the level that Peter Dibb has played his cricket at and it is an amazing achievement for him to have played for so long. To play this long he must have a secret to being able to play this long! "I played hockey until I was 61 and I enjoy running so this is how I have managed to keep playing."

Over the years Peter Dibb has a lot of stories to tell about his time as a player. He was involved in a match against Hall Bower and with Honley needing 7 to win off 3 balls and he was on strike. He then ran a ball down to third man and in going for a single he caught his studs in the ground and then fell over, he had to get up and run the single without his bat. This would prove to be crucial however as a six was hit off the next ball and Honley won the

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game. Peter Dibb also top edged a ball into his ball into his head and suffered nine stitches during a match.

Peter Dibb's role in local league cricket in Huddersfield has not been restricted to just playing either. From 1991 to 1999 Peter Dibb was in charge of the Huddersfield Under 17 District League representative team. This involved going to watch cricket right across the Huddersfield League and then picking a team to compete in the Joe Lumb League, a competition that included 14 teams representing the cricket leagues in Yorkshire such as Bradford and Barnsley. Under the management of Peter Dibb the Huddersfield and District League triumphed in the Joe Lumb League by defeating the Bradford league in the final. The Joe Lumb League has been the competition that has uncovered a number of future stars in the game of cricket such as Anthony McGrath, who played for Bradford against the Huddersfield League, Darren Gough, who played for Barnsley and Richard Blakey, who played for Huddersfield.

As far as pre match routines go Peter Dibb is known for his boxes of sandwiches on a match day. Still at 72 years of age he is going strong as the leading bowler and Second XI Captain of Honley Cricket Club. Peter Dibb was a member of the Honley Second XI that captured three successive Paddock Shields from 2001 to 2003 and he even made a return to the First XI during the 2002 season at the age of 68. It was then that he dismissed the best batsman in the League Brandon Nash, who had compiled 2,000 runs during

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the season. Peter Dibb is just as enthusiastic about the game as the day he started playing and his incredible career will continue in 2006.