

SUCCESSIVE DEFEATS LEAVE SHEPLEY REELING

By Dave Wooding

1st team's debut home fixture of 2007 sees cup run end before it even begins...

Sunday 22 April saw Shepley exit the Heavy Woollen Cup in the first round at the hands of last year's runners-up Baildon. Having won the toss, Baildon elected to bat on a pristine Marsh Lane wicket, setting an imposing total of 312-6 in their 50 overs.



A good start from the hosts saw last year's runners up reach just 11 by the time the first wicket fell in the 4th over. Australian Copeland, in his first match at Marsh Lane, beat the bat of opener Webb, and saw his delivery smash into middle stump to give the hosts an early advantage. The visitors, however, soon restored the balance of the match in their favour, picking up the tempo to reach 47-1 off ten overs.

A change in bowling instantly paid dividends, as Craig Glover replaced his brother Danny for the 11th over. Opener Webb sliced a shot to backward point, and a spectacular catch was held in one hand by Hugh Ellis. Craig was joined shortly afterwards in the bowling attack by skipper Phil Heaton, but he initially could do very little as Baildon, led by Bhatti and Reynolds, began scoring freely. Eventually, Phil's patience paid off. The left-handed Bhatti sliced a delivery high into the Shepley sky, and as it came down Craig Glover was there to take a simple catch, leaving the visitors 88-3 in the 18th over.

The arrival of Duce to the crease saw Baildon began to cut loose, and Reynolds reached his fifty in just 53 balls, taking two runs to long-on in the 28th over. Following a spell of dominance by the Baildon batsmen, quick man Copeland returned to the fold in the 34th over. His short spell bore no fruit for the home side, though, as Baildon continued to press for a big score. Duce reached his 50 in the 39th over, but was then run out in the 42nd as he failed to make a two to the fielder at long-on.

However, his partnership of 144 with Reynolds had by this stage guided Baildon to 232. Captain Philliskirk made a quickfire 16 before being clean bowled by Craig

Glover, and Batty was run out shortly after for just 3. However, by this stage the damage had been done, and Baildon had already accumulated 262, as Mushtaq Ahmed made his way out to the middle. Reynolds got his reward for a fine batting display in the 49th over, as he passed 100 in just 109 balls, and from there he and Ahmed made the most of the remaining balls to post a formidable 312.

Needing a run rate of over 6 an over, Shepley started brightly in response. Opening batsman Ashley Littlewood took little time to get his eye in, cracking boundaries off the second and third balls of the innings. Early boundaries were followed up by good running between the wickets with his partner Sam Haigh, allowing the score to rattle along to 25-0 from just 4 overs. Littlewood then hit the first maximum of the innings just a few overs later, cracking a delivery over the square-leg boundary in the seventh. A Baildon bowling change brought about the first wicket, as Haigh edged a delivery to gully, leaving the score at 45-1 as he trudged off the field.

New batsman Phil Heaton survived two lbw appeals from his first two deliveries. A good, fast-paced partnership developed between him and the surviving Littlewood, as the score moved up to 93-1 after 20 overs. Heaton was eventually caught for 22 with the score on 97, as he went for a big hit, caught by a fielder right on the boundary. This did not stop Shepley though, as the arrival of Trent Copeland brought much anticipation around the ground. Littlewood completed a valiant half-century as he pulled a short delivery wide of square-leg. Glimpses of Trent's ability were seen in the 29th over as he smacked a huge six back over long-off before then beating the long-on fielder for four.

However, three quick wickets put Baildon firmly in control. First, Ashley was caught on the cover boundary with the score at 141, and newcomer Craig Glover lasted just two balls before being caught behind off the bowling of Ahmed. When Copeland was trapped leg before wicket trying to sweep across the line on 28, Shepley looked out of the game at 146-5.

Hugh Ellis set about guiding Shepley to a respectable score, punishing the rare bad balls and claiming a maximum with a sweetly timed shot in the 38th over. As rain attempted to threaten the fixture, Danny Glover was stumped, leaving Shepley 183-6. Walters then succumbed to a peach of a delivery from Batty, and the hosts were left at 184-7. Ellis continued to frustrate the Baildon bowlers, but Rob Denton could add just 4 to the total before he lost his wicket.

As the match drew closer to conclusion, Thorpe rode his luck with successive sixes before his luck ran out and he was bowled by Reynolds for 16. However, Shepley managed to dig in deep and lasted their 50 overs, finishing on 222-9, with Ellis 36 not out.