

Kristian Whittaker: In at the Deep End

By Matt Elston

Kristian Whittaker has benefited from a varied cricket career. He has enjoyed fruitful spells with Clayton West, Scholes and, even more notably, Johannesburg's Wanderers. Kris's father Adrian enjoyed a long cricketing career with Clayton West and is now the President of the Huddersfield Central Cricket League.



This youngster's career began at the deep end when a phone call from John Dollive led to him representing Skelmanthorpe's under-13 side against Barnsley juniors who were renowned for producing Yorkshire players such as Alex Morris - who Kris remembers facing in his first whites, a cut-off pair of baking trousers and school shirt. He grew up scoring for Clayton West first team, who his father captained, and often helped out when the seconds were short. Aged 14, Kris enjoyed his first full senior season for CWCC. But he played his junior cricket at Skelmanthorpe, and it was this strong bond that bought him back some years later.

Whittaker has fond memories of his time with Clayton West, recalling two centuries and two hat-tricks in the same season. At 17 he moved to 'better himself' with Skelmanthorpe who were playing in a higher league at the time. The same winter Kristian spent time in South Africa with family where he played alongside England seam bowler Jon Lewis. Kris spent his weeks coaching at the boarding school at which he was staying and used his weekends to play cricket and get drunk with Lewis: 'Jon took his cricket and his nights out very seriously. I remember waking up at his house thinking castle lager, hangovers and 30-degree heat aren't the perfect combination.'

This experience shaped Kris's career and he considers himself to have benefited enormously from playing at a higher level than he was used to. His move to Skelmanthorpe only lasted a year as they were relegated. He returned to Clayton West after declining an offer from Holme Valley side Scholes.

Whittaker soon realised he had passed up a fantastic opportunity with Scholes, who were flying high thanks to the exploits of big-hitting Indian star Wasim Jaffer. When Scholes again came calling it was time for another move. He spent four seasons at Chapelgate, enjoying success in the league and reaching the Sykes Cup final before returning again to Lidget Lane.

Kristian has now been part of the Skelmanthorpe set-up for the past two seasons and is a valuable part of the first team. He adds a lot of character and sees himself as a guy who is never short of changing-room banter. He is thankful for the patience and belief shown in him during spells in the second team, and no doubt this committed, energetic cricketer will continue to repay this faith.