

Skelmanthorpe Fantasy XI

By Matt Elston

For every club that has ever won silverware, and for any fan who has watched different teams take to the wicket and seen players young and old come and go, the ultimate question is: who was the best of the best?

Geoff Crompton was keen to compile a list of some of the most influential players he has had the pleasure to play alongside. The side can only contain one foreign player, to Geoff's obvious disappointment. "There are quite a lot of good overseas players that we've had. Mahboob stayed for '89, '90 and '91. We got Darren Bull in 1992 and he was part of the only other time we won the Byrom Shield. We had Paras Mambray who went on to play Test cricket for India the winter after being at Skelmanthorpe."



Geoff's all-star line-up opens with Michael Bridge and Darren Hinchliffe. "They were our openers when we won everything in 1990. Byrom Shield, Sykes Cup and Mini-Cricket". At number 3 Graham Higgins comes in to add composure and firepower to the attack. Graham was also part of the successful 1990 team and Geoff includes three more of this team in his 'Fantasy XI'.

The ex-England Test and One-Day International player Ronnie Irani (above) makes number 4. Irani is followed by Crossland at 5 and "cultured batsman and occasional bowler" Arif Mahmood at number 6.

Number 7 is Mike Bocarro, who Geoff describes as "one of the leading all-rounders there's ever been in the Huddersfield League," followed by current wicketkeeper batsman Max Joice, who opens the batting in the Shat 1st XI today but only warrants a place at number 8 in this imaginary side. The strength of this team is enhanced by the selection of Shahid Mahboob. "A player who can get 133 in next to no time against Marsden in a Sykes Cup match, he also holds the record for 114 wickets in the 1990 season and averaged well over 30 with the bat".

Charlie Johnson who opened the batting and bowling during Skelmanthorpe's first Section 'B' promotion year in 1987 is number 10 and at number 11 and captain of the team is Graham Hurlbatt. "I put Graham in there because he only had one year at Skelmanthorpe as captain and we won the Byrom Shield, Sykes Cup and Mini-Cricket - his record is unblemished."

The strength of this side with the bat is second to none. Yet it is interesting to see that this isn't where it all ends. The strength of the batting is reflected in the bowlers too. "When you look at the bowlers you've got Hurlbatt and Mahboob to open the bowling and Charlie Johnson who was an opening bowler and useful change bowler. You've got Mike Bocarro who can bowl off-spin or medium pace, Ronnie Irani who used to bowl when he played with us, Graham Higgins and Darren Hinchliffe. It's full of bowling and full of batting."

Geoff recognises that this team will never play together at the standard he witnessed - but it's food for thought for anyone turning up to watch Skelmanthorpe, and inspiration for budding and potential talent.