

Second XI

2024 Season

In 2024 we were to have new opponents in Queensbury CC and Outlane CC to overcome whilst Low Moor and Stones would again provide stiff tests. But we looked forward with great confidence based on our 2023 baptism in the HCL. Nine wins wasn't enough and the target was surely to be 13 or 14 to propel us to a first promotion. Was this target realistic and could our playing resources improve sufficiently to cope with the pressure?

The squad continued to include experience from Michael, Stevie, Sajjad, Paul, Noman, and Wajid. Also far from beginners we had Matty, Rob G, Charlie S and back on a regular basis Ricky. Tom was to be elevated permanently to the First XI but the youthful end of the side still included Subhaan, Akeel, Saad and Joe. There was also promise from Louis, Asim, Elis, Ayaan, Dawud, Ollie and Logan to consider. Joe was now recovered from his bout of Osgood-Slatters and was to resume bowling seam-up instead of leggies, so the spin bowling department looked a little thin with the pace attack still potent with Ricky replacing Tom. It seemed likely that the sought-after improvement would have to come from the batters through more consistent contributions.

In common with all other fixtures, the one in April at home to Outlane was lost to the weather which had been the worst for many years. So it was to be the short hop across to The Flatt for the derby match with Oxenhope that would start the 2024 campaign, although the weather still remained a threat. The line up surprisingly included Charlie Raby, who opened with left-hander Saad. There was a progression of middling scores and we found ourselves at 78-6 and on the back foot. The rescue came from Subhaan and Sajjad almost doubling the score with a superb 72-run partnership. Unexpectedly perhaps the aggressor proved to be Sajjad with 57 from just 65 balls whilst Subhaan played the anchor-role to perfection with 24 from 71. The final tally was 181-8. Quite pleased with the scoreline, our bowlers also faced an anchor in Oxenhope skipper Callum Holmes but it was his partner Tanveer who decided that to avoid a rain-affected abandonment he would just go for it. He rattled off 64 runs from just 26 balls with 6 fours and 5 sixes at its heart. Charlie R winkled him out at 82-1 but at 113-1 the rain arrived and the match was abandoned 31 overs before schedule. We took 5 points from the game and Oxenhope 6.

Back at HQ it was a visit from Luddendenfoot next up to try and get the 'W' column under way. The lynchpin of our innings was Matty, turning the clock back from the opener position. His brilliant 95 came from 130 balls but he couldn't get over the line for the 'ton' whilst at the crease at the end. At 121-6 our score could have gone either way and it was skipper Michael [37 no] that paired with Matty to add another unbeaten 57 to the tally for 178 on the board. Four of our wickets had fallen to Cook with 4-45 [11 overs] whilst Charlie S and Wajid made starts. Our bowling attack was right on the money with a fiery Ricky [3-10] taking out the top order. Joe's 9 overs brought him a terrific 3-42 on his return to pace. Akeel 2-28 and Charlie R 2-51 helped finish the job, having the visitors all out 142 to claim our first 12-pointer of the season. The visitors' resistance was led by Craven [60] and no 9 Brooke [33] but never really threatened our score.

The first round Crosslay Shield Cup-tie at Home brought new-to-us Outlane to Wide Lane. Michael won the toss and opted to bat in not good conditions. A disaster loomed at 57-8 as the batting crumbled to the bowling of King [3-26] and Shaw [3-10], both of whom had excellent back up. It was the batting of no 9 Noman [15] and no 10 Akeel [33] that provided a little hope in a run-a-ball 53 run counter-attack. The final 'Nelson' [111] looked extremely vulnerable. But what goes around comes around and our bowlers also used the conditions to good effect. The openers Jimmy and Ricky made just 1 breakthrough though and after their 18 overs, Michael opted to bring his own wicket-to-wicket approach into play. His 3-12 broke the back of the Outlane batting and all our bowlers joined in the counter attack. At 93-8 the last pair were at the wicket for the 10-man visitors. Shaw and Davis eeked out runs where they could. In a bold move the final over was given to then wicket-less young Joe with the pressure well and truly on as Outlane reached 107 with 3 balls remaining and 5 required to win. In fairy-tale style Joe opened and closed his account rattling the timbers of Davis to claim a narrow 4-run victory. Outlane were left to regret the absence of an eleventh player. Another win and we were in the next round.

The long trek to Leymoor was next up whilst the weather still wasn't spring-like. Michael backed his on-form bowlers and chose to bowl. Another correct call soon had the home side at 28-5 with another 3-15 from 12 very tight overs for Ricky. He had wicketless backing from Akeel who gave only 17 runs from his 7 opening overs. Michael again brought himself on as a first change and with 3 caught, 1 hit wicket and a smart stumping from Matty, he had a five-for in just 9 overs [5-21]. Leymoor folded at 71 all out in 32.5 overs of torture. Matty soon settled after a duck for Saad and his 40 came off just 29 balls. Our target of 72 came up in just 81 balls and we were soon off back to Oakworth with another 12 points in the bag. The following week a much stiffer test was expected from top-of-the-table Low Moor, made stiffer still by the absence of skipper Michael. By the time their opener Nick Wood was out for 83 the home team's tally was 138-2 and with steady contributions down the line Low Moor reached exactly 200-8. Akeel had led the attack with 4-52 an inexperienced back up couldn't really capitalise despite 2 wickets for Ollie Thompson and 1 for Logan. The batting too was sombre and never got to grips with Smith [5-19] and Jenkins [3-18] suffering 4 lbw decisions to finish all out for only 78 in the 30th over. It was a reality check that showed at our strongest we compete but at our weakest we struggle.

A third trip in a row took us to Clayton on the first day of flaming June. Michael again inserted the opposition. At 76-5 there was a degree of satisfaction with wickets for Charlie S [2] and Michael [2] providing the breakthroughs. No 7 Hodgson proved a thorn in the side making 42 from 45 balls to generate the Clayton recovery which concluded on 155-9. Charlie S was the pick of the attack with 4-34. Opener Saad was to be sixth out with 54 to his name from 89 balls having set us up well in the chase. We stood on 125-6 requiring 31 to win. But wily bowlers Walker [4-39] and Mistry [3-13] kept us in check and it became a cat and mouse game as the overs ticked by. Joe, Subhaan and Michael all fell to have us teetering on the brink of another defeat at 144-9. Our last pair of Sajjad and Ricky picked off the singles when they could, consuming 40 balls between them. In the 42nd over the pair had drawn the scores level, only for Sajjad [4] to be given out lbw. A tied match and we took 7 points from it. Not having played at Wide Lane for 3 weeks we faced Premier Division Booth in a home Crossley Shield 2nd round match on the Sunday. Our faltering batting continued to fail and our top scorer was Saad with a meagre 11, no-one else reached double figures [5 ducks]. Booth bowlers Laprell 4-20 and Brumby 4-2 had a field days we tumbled to 49 all out in 27.2 overs of discomfort. Akeel and the two Charlies did recover fading pride with 7 wickets in the Booth reply which also struggled for 25.5 overs in reaching 53-7. Charlie S 3-12 and Akeel 2-5 had paved the way for Charlie R 2-11. But we exited the Shield.

Stones CC came calling the following Saturday and another tough encounter was expected. They chose to bat but tumbled to 16-4 Ricky and Sajjad hit their straps early. Then the fifth wicket changed the equation significantly as Robbins [53] and Webster [34] dug in to accumulate and reached 100 before their stand was broken. Robbins and the tail chipped in another 43 runs as all four bowlers returned decent figures: Ricky [2-23], Sajjad [2-30], Joe [2-54] and Charlie S [3-22]. The batters were now under pressure again to support the efforts of the bowlers. 52-5 didn't augur well as our top order failed again [Benn taking 4-38]. Michael at no 7 dug in after Steve fell for 10 [65-6] and he found support from no 9 Subhaan who stayed at the crease for 40 balls making 13. But Michael was caught for a battling 36 [70 balls] at 119-8 to be immediately followed by Sajjad at 119-9. Last par Subhaan and Ricky needed 25 more for us to win. Three 4s and a six showed Ricky's intent and his run-a-ball 19 coupled with solid defence from Subhaan proved up to the task and 144-9 was reached 15 balls to spare. Phew, back on the 12-point hauls, our total on 53 points from 3 wins, 1 tie, 1 defeat and 2 abandonments with Stainland, Southowram, Cullingworth and Augustinians yet to play till halfway.

The home fixture vs Stainland was a third victim of the still poor weather. So after a week off we travelled to old friends Southowram with a new colleague in the lineup. It was Liam Brookes who had transferred from Crossflatts and shown good all-round form with both bat and ball in the Sunday team. Michael chose to bat. Sadly, Saad, Matty and Charlie R all fell cheaply to have us at 40-3. Liam and Subhaan, now rightly back in the top order added 27 before Liam was out for 17 having shown aggressive intent with 2 four and a six. With starts for Michael, Ellis, Ricky, Rob G and Akeel the scoreboard ticked without whizzing to 103-7. Rob and Ricky added 30, Ricky and Akeel another 12. We had tallied 151 but frustratingly had batted for just 32.4 overs indicating what might have been possible with a little more circumspection. The Rams skipper Nik Bellinger held his side together with 47 no with great support from Coles [29] and evergreen opener Veal [24] but at 115 Ellis was introduced to the attack and turned our fortunes round. He took 3-30 as the overs began to run out.

No-one had been able to remove Bellinger and he found sufficient resolve at the tail to see it through to 141-8. It was a winning draw for Oakworth and we took 10 points to the Rams 4.

Back at Home we looked forward to the visit of Cullingworth. Once again we opted to bat first. This time we made a better if not brilliant start with 76-3 on the board thanks to 25 from Matty and 19 from Wajid. From 82-4 Stevie [46] and Akeel [20] took us to 134-5 and then 165-6. This was rarified atmosphere for our batters as there was just a sign the wickets were beginning to harden. Another 20 from Liam pushed us into the stratosphere. Stevie was 9th man out but Logan copped a 'Goldie' at 221 all out. Buoyed by the batters performance, Akeel 4-23, Charlie S 4-20 and Liam 1-13 enjoyed themselves and Cullingworth were back in the hutch for 108 in the 32nd over. Another 12 points and the batters showing improved form. Happy day. Into July and a likely stiff challenge also at Wide Lane from Augustinians for debutant Adnan. Michael opted to field. His decision vindicated at 56-5 had come about with 4-32 from Sajjad. A middle order stand from Liaquat and Hafiz carried them further but Akeel too was in top form with 3-33 in his 9 overs. But it was Liam who finished off the assault with 3-14 from 7.4 overs. Augustinians closed on 152 all out after the final four added 28. Now then batters, show us again your better form. Only Saad failed with Paul [20], Subhaan [45 no] and Stevie [51] propelling us to the full points in 36.1 overs at 153-4 and a handsome 6-wicket win.

We made the trip to distant Outlane in good heart, following good results but also remembering our narrow Cup squeak at home earlier in the season. Outlane chose to field. Early losses of Matty, Charlie R and Wajid were overcome by solidity from juniors Saad [24] and Joe. But when skipper Michael fell at 52-5 some of the alarm bells started to sound. But 18 from a rare Louis outing and run-a-ball aggression from in form Akeel picked us up from a potential banana-skin fall. Joe went on to a sterling 41 [75 balls] whilst Akeel remained unbowed at 45 no. With 14 from Liam we tallied a reasonable 183-9. Davis with 5-40 had been troublesome for Outlane. Now it was up to the bowlers. But for the first time this season they failed and got whacked in 38.4 overs. The punishment was administered by opener Read with 100 [117 balls], Shaw 45 and Brook 27 no. Their 185-1 of course took the 12 points whilst we limped home with just 2. The next match would provide opportunity to react positively, it was the derby game with Oxenhope at Wide lane. This time we were inserted by the visitors. 55 for the first wicket was a great start from Saad [17] and Matty [36] but both fell to Rohit Ali within 1 run of each other. Missing last week Subhaan returned to the top order and he showed his form had not faded. With Rob, Joe and Liam he stayed resolute to 135-5. When he fell for 46, Michael picked up the mantle and his 17 enabled us to reach 172-8. Not dramatic but a decent target. Amjad had picked up 4-48 at 6 per over. It was Michael 4-26 which led the way, backed by Joe 3-15, Ricky 2-41 & Sajjad 1-14. Oxenhope crumpled to 99 all out in 28.3 overs with just 3 batters reaching double figures. It was a wholly convincing win and another 12 points gained. The following week Luddendenfoot conceded unable to raise a team to gift us a further 12 points.

So Leymoor were next at Wide Lane and they chose to bat with only 9 players available. A first ball peach from Ricky made their task harder as Brook was comprehensively bowled. No 3 Cockroft showed glimpses and made 32 and was 6th out. Liam and Sajjad proved too wily for the visitors and Liam returned 3-1 and Sajjad 2-31 as despite 23 from Lockwood and 22 from Jones their knock ended at 114 all out in 30-1 overs. The Leymoor bowling proved a little more troublesome with Simpson grabbing 4-39, backed by 2-20 from Brook. In a frantic innings Subhaan again led the scorers with 29 aided by 23 from Stevie in a 116-6 riposte of 16 overs. The 12 points zoomed us into the top three. The visit to leaders Low Moor was an opportunity to consolidate in the top two and we were inserted to bat first. At 34-4 with the skipper one of those, our prospects didn't look that healthy. In-form Subhaan again shone with 26 but it was Liam [32], Rob [27], Ricky [20] and Akeel [20] who drove our scoring forward to a competitive 182 all out. Home bowler Jenkins challenged us with 4-24 in a terrific contest. Early wickets for Ricky had the Low Moor tally at 37-3 and the game was certainly on. The telling knock came from Sunny Kumar with 66 no and he too had plenty of support. Our bowling wilted a little under a rapid assault and the leaders reached their target at 183-6 in just 31.5 overs. So the league leaders widened the gap as we took only 3 points to their 12.

Back at HQ we needed to get back on the horse as soon as possible but visitors Clayton would be no push over. We had a surprise contributor in the shape of Bilaal Khan making his first appearance for over a year. They chose to bat amidst another Ricky early blast and reached 57-3. Opener McDermott made a determined 29 but

the innings of Hassan Khan was a late concern as he added 31 despite the Captain's 5-36 trying to stem their advance. Their innings ended at 154 with Ricky still with his opening 3 for 38. It was an amazing return for Bilaal as he stayed resolute without his previous tendency to go for impossible drives over the top and tallied a 94-ball opening of 54. Unfortunately no-one could stay with him, only Joe adding 12 as the batting failed to click, tumbling to 106 all out. The damage was inflicted by a canny Damien Walker 4-19 and 2-18 from leftie Owais Mahmood, the tail folding to Ifzaan Shafique's 2-2. The four points were welcome but our chances of catching Low Moor had all but gone but we did remain in the chasing group. Going over to Stones would give a pointer as to whether we could maintain our place near the top. Michael asked the home team to bat and our bowlers lived up to that decision. Ricky was the ace in the pack with 5-29 with Liam his partner-in-chief grabbing 3-30. At one point, Stones were at 67-8 and almost out for the count but the last two wickets added another 46 runs, 21 to Whitton and 23 to last man Walton to finish at 113 all out.. The batting looked solid again and incredibly Bilaal added a second innings of 54 to spearhead the successful reply inside 24 overs at 116-3 and an unexpectedly easy 12 points.

Another sojourn beyond Halifax, this time to Stainland again saw us bowl first. This time the home batters opened well with 33 and 40 for Singh and Proctor. Thereafter Michael 4-31 and Ricky 3-44 led a rampant attack to limit the remaining Stainland line-up, only Sarfraz adding 38 in the 137 total in 43,1 overs. No Bilaal this week but Dan Pummel came in from the First XI and re-found form from the off. His 73no ensured the points came our way with Subhaan 41 no, his aide-de-camp. They needed just 22.3 overs to make the early journey home, having lost only 1 wicket [Saad] en route. Now the 'P' word was on everyone's lips. Southowram were to be our last Home visitors. They met the full force of our bowling with Ricky on fire taking 5-51and compadre Liam the perfect counter-balance with 4-19. David Jowett as usual chipped in with 29 and their captain Nik Bellinger remained unbeaten on 37 but the rest of his team struggled with three making their debuts. The Southowram tally was just 89 all out in 28 overs. Dan [33] and Matty [54] just blasted the target in 11.3 overs at 91-0. Almost there but still work to do.

That work was to be at neighbours Cullingworth, who had firmly dented our First XI despite their promotion last week. The home side put us in. 68 for the first wicket was a great start, 31 to elevated Sajjad and 34 for Dan. And the runs kept coming. 50 from Subhaan and 44 from Joe were both special knocks for the two younger players. Still we hadn't finished as Liam walloped a late 29 from just 16 balls to carry us on to 233-8 at the close of innings. Over to the bowlers. Cullingworth were soon at 46-4 Thanks to Joe a min-revival of 27 runs didn't last long before the home side were 78-7 after Liam joined the contest. His 4-13 proved destructive and with 2-0 from the skipper, Cullingworth collapsed to 87 all out. And it was later confirmed that our boys were promoted to Division One for 2025 irrespective of the result at Augustinians next week. Inserted at the salubrious Woodhouse surroundings, our lads got off to a deadly start with a 'Goldie' for Dan. Matty assumed the anchor role on a difficult track. He held out until 50-6 and things looked bleak, and at 64-9 even more desperate. Augustinians opening bowler Hussain had a great day with 5-28 coupled with his mate Amjad's 3-35. Their figures would have been significantly better without the attention of Akeel and Ricky. Between them they took up 68 balls and scored 61, 36 to Akeel and 25 to Ricky. The tally was now 124 all out and there was half a chance. Augustinians were kept to 66-5, 34 to opener Liaquat. We had fought back through Akeel, Joe and Ricky. No 5 Amjad halted the tumble with 37 no, but at 101-6 the match was poised. With no 8 Jabran the pair moved the score to 117-7 and then 125 came up for a Home win, which enabled them to leap-frog us into third place and also gain promotion.

2024 Outcome

The final outcome of fourth place was hard-earned for a team still finding its best XI and batting order. Like the First XI there had been great reliance on the bowlers but the objective was reached in the end. We took 11 outright wins, 1 win awarded, 1 winning draw, 1 Tie, 3 abandonments and 5 defeats. 2,792 runs scored and 167 opposition wickets taken. Of our 186 points gleaned, 96 [up 7] came at Home with 90 [up 22] on the road.

Overall, we undertook 20 innings scoring 2,792 runs or 139 per match, our opponents had 19 innings and scored 2,511 or 133 per match. Our bowlers took 167 wickets whilst our opponents were adrift by 34 at 135. Our positive dominance factor was 27% or 5.7 runs per wicket. We topped 200 twice, out best of 233-8 vs

Cullingworth. Our worst was the dismal 78 at Home to Champions Low Moor. We batted first 9 times, winning 5, when chasing 10 times we gleaned 6 wins.

	OAKWORTH				OPPONENTS				OAKWORTH			
	HOME		AWAY		HOME		AWAY		HOME		AWAY	
	Runs	Wkts lost	Runs	Wkts lost	Conceded	Wkts taken	Conceded	Wkts taken	Av Bat	Av Bowl	Av Bat	Av Bowl
2024`	1256	63	1536	72	1201	88	1310	79	19.94	13.65	21.33	16.59
2023	1287	54	1224	74	904	74	1346	75	23.83	12.22	16.54	17.95
Change	-31	+9	+312	-2	+297	+14	+36	+4	-3.89	+1.43	+4.79	-1.36

But from the table above it can be seen that in comparing our first two seasons in HCL, there is a marked difference in Home and Away out-turns.

Wide Lane

At Wide Lane seven of the nine completed matches were won, two lost [Low Moor and Clayton] whilst the rain claimed the Outlane & Stainland fixtures. Further good news was that combined run scoring on the square produced an average of 246 runs per match [up 3] despite the atrocious weather. On average 15.1 wickets fell [up 0.9] showing slightly more help for bowlers.

On our own midden our players' record deteriorated slightly, scoring 31 runs fewer and losing 9 more wickets but with just 7 more match points gleaned. Their average match scoring from the 9 matches was 139 [up 9] whilst that of our opponents also rose but by 9 to 135. But to achieve these average team scores, nine more wickets were lost by our boys and 14 by their opponents, again showing a slight tilt towards the bowlers. As a result our RPW fell to 19.9 from 23.8 whilst that of our visitors actually rose from 12.2 to 13.7.

The consequence was that our dominance factor fell from 48% to 32% as our opponents narrowed the gap on their second visits to our beautiful home.

Away from Home

On opponents grounds we completed 10 matches [concession by Luddendenfoot], winning 5, taking 1 Tie [Clayton] and 1 winning draw [Southowram] with just 3 losses at Outlane, Low Moor and Augustinians.

On the road our total run-scoring accelerated by 312 runs to 1,536 whilst losing 2 fewer wickets [72]. Not surprisingly then did we gather those 22 more points than in 2023 when visiting.

We had looked for a 10% improvement in performance but pleasingly an amazing transformation in our away efforts turned our average match score from 136 in 2023 to 153 [up 17, 12%] this season. Furthermore our opponents average on their own grounds actually fell 19 [12%] from 150 to 131. Credit for these remarkable turn-rounds have to be shared by both batters and bowlers. The batters scored 31 runs per match more than in 2023 at an RPW increased from 16.5 to 21.4, The bowlers took 0.4 more wickets per match, improving their RPW to 16.6 from 18.0.

We had a dominance factor of 22% on our visitors grounds, showing clearly the reason for our success.

Overall

Our overall key statistics make very pleasant reading; run scoring up 281 runs, wicket-taking up 18, batting RPW improved by 1.06 [5%], bowling RPW by 0.06 [0.4%], winning 12 matches outright [up 3] producing 28 more match points [186] and culminating in increased overall dominance from 23% to 27%.

Appearances

19 matches were commenced in 2024 with Captain Michael turning out in 18 of them. Stevie and Ricky appeared 16 times with Subhaan, Joe, Akeel and Wajid managing 15. Altogether 25 players were used, 2 fewer than in 202, six of them just once.

Batters

Matty Lee was our leading run-scorer with 313 runs from 11 innings at magnificent average of 34.78. his best in the first home match vs Luddendenfoot of 95. Now fully settled back in he opened most of the innings and kept wicket in true Alex Stewart fashion! Marginally behind Matty came a refreshed Subhaan with 305 runs from 12 innings at 33.89, his top score 50 at Cullingworth. Now settled at College and at work Subhaan is reaping the rewards his junior prowess always promised. Vice-captain Stevie Powell enjoyed a renaissance [at age 55] with 190 runs [13 innings] at 15.83 and a best of 51 vs Augustinians. Then, continuing the input by youth, 15 years-old Joe Powell was fourth highest scorer with 169 from 13 innings at 14.08 including a high of 44 also at Cullingworth. His progress as an all-rounder moved on apace. Usual opener left-hander Saad racked up 155 albeit at a disappointing 11.92 from his 13 innings, which included an excellent 54 vs Clayton. New kid on the block Liam had a brilliant all-round debut season and has proved a vital cog in the team. His average 17.11 came from 10 innings with a top score of 32. Yet another all-rounder Akeel is finally winning matches for the team, frequently at the tail end of innings and in tandem with Liam. He tallied 147 runs from 10 innings at an excellent 21.00 with a best of 45. His star is now starting to shine more often. Captain Michael generally keeps himself towards the lower end of the line up but still added 142 runs to the cause from 12 innings. At 53 his batting glory days are perhaps behind him, his best this year of 37, but he remains a contributor with the willow at average 15.78. Dan Pummel's introduction to Oakworth has been a testing one in the First XI but his five innings for the Second XI have produced 141 runs with a terrific 73 at Stainland his season's best. His average an impressive 47.00. Another in his fifties, evergreen Sajjad whilst principally a bowler, still shows creative touches with the bat and this year he input 120 runs from his 8 knocks including a brilliant 57 at Oxenhope. Bilaal Khan made three cameo appearances and struck 54 in each of two of them to tally 114 with a much more considered style than of previous years. Welcome back Bilaal [?] For Wajid, 2024 has not been his best year as his lowly 9.91 average and best of 19 reveals. His 109 runs coming from 12 innings. Finally, tailender usually, Ricky, aspiring as an all-rounder role, showed why with some face-saving excellent innings low down the order. He tallied 107 at a stunning 21.40, a best of 25. All in all there were 13 batters making 100 runs or more and a further 13 others also turned out in the cause for a total of 37 innings bringing 285 runs.

Bowlers.

Leading the attack proved a fillip for Ricky who bowled 146.2 overs at decent pace and delivered 34 wickets; His average was a brilliant 15.29 off a 26 strike-rate and 58 economy. His best 5-29 at Stones. At his best early in his spell, he proved a handful for many HCL batters. The skipper brought himself into the attack for 70 overs to snatch 25 wickets when the openers tired. His best was a startling 5-21 vs Leymoor. His season's strike rate at 17 and economy of 50 will remain the envy of many. 2024 new lad Liam proved a really useful all-round addition in a variety of roles. His 22 wickets at a superb 10.05 average from SR 19 and Econ 54. His best was 4-13 at Cullingworth. Oft opener but usual first change Sajjad continues to grab scalps, 17 this year at 17.71. His economy remains excellently below 50 although his SR has fallen to a modest 38 from 107.5 overs but had a best of 4-32 vs Augustinians. Coming up on the rails is all-rounder Joe, now again bowling seam-up in 99.1 overs with 15 wickets at 28.60. With Econ of 72 and SR at 40 there is plenty of scope for improvement and at only 15 years old has plenty of time in which to do it. His best was 3-15 vs Oxenhope. Also on 15 wickets was Akeel at a cracking 22.40 driven by Econ of 55 but a disappointing SR of 40 from 101 overs. But as his best of 4-23 vs Cullingworth shows, he retains all the attributes required. In limited appearances and frustratingly a possible last season at Wide Lane, Charlie S claimed 11 wickets at a fabulous 6.91 average with a terrific best of 4-20 vs Cullingworth, overall striking at less than 15 a match winner when 'on song'. These seven bowlers were the principal attack choices but 8 others did contribute when needed.

Going forward

The above described amazing turnaround in our fortunes on the road, augur well for 2025 as we are getting used to the HCL, generally good, tracks. Youth in the form of Subhaan, Joe, Saad, Liam and Akeel is well represented in the squad. Matty has plenty of miles left in the tank as has Ricky having accumulated 77 and 61 appearances respectively. If Bilaal can be persuaded to return on a regular basis we might have a youthful eight players in the frame for 2025, as Shimm seems to be out of the reckoning. Elis and Louis are not yet available regularly and will probably remain as 'occasionals'. Dan Pummel may also be available depending on First XI selections. From the Sunday team, Ayaan, Dawud and Logan offer the best prospects for inclusion.

Skipper Michael now has 99 appearances to his name in the Second team database, whilst Stevie has a titanic 480, Paul 120 and Sajjad 72 of the older brigade. The absence of Noman, limited appearances from Rob G this year and the loss of form from Wajid remain holes to be filled. So any thoughts of retirement from the veterans may be shelved a little longer.

The First Division offers a tougher prospect in 2025 and progress from the younger players will be critical with the possibility of new or First team blood also under consideration, for example Charlie Raby, Ellis Marshall and/or Liam Humphreys.