

The First Xi 2025 season

Once the euphoria of a double promotion in 2024 had subsided, the squad turned attention to a challenging campaign in the Halifax League First Division. Whilst we had no direct experience of the standard, it was obvious it would be tougher than in Division Two.

Optimism was high even though there was no early indication of new players joining the squad. In fact the pre-season planning was disrupted firstly in the knowledge that Sam Nettleton would not be staying as he was to play at [Menston](#) CC with a mate. Sam had settled back in very well in 2024 and his batting had been of solid quality. If that was bad news we also learned that Skipper Robert had suffered an injury at work and might miss a substantial chunk of the campaign. Soon news filtered in from the winter nets that Callum Hardy from Sutton was joining the club. He was a Regional under-15 junior of enormous potential, having been a 2023 Cricketer of the Year in UAJCA, but was he ready for senior team action? A further boost was confirmation that 2024 signing, also still a junior, Noah Thirkill would be looking to continue to build his career with us. Not surprising though was the news that rumours of retirement of former Captain Joel were just that, rumours. So the persistent conversation topic, was would the squad be strong enough for the Division?

After the first match was re-scheduled due to the weather, we would be chucked in at the deep end with a new opener versus Luddendenfoot, just relegated from the Premier League! Thomas took on the temporary captaincy role. Anyone viewing our prospects through rose-coloured spectacles was soon brought to earth.

Thomas won the toss and opted to bat. Only three of our batters made double figures, the highest James with 24. Our all-out total of exactly 100 came in 36.4 overs. The 'Foot' used four bowlers with 3 taking 2 each an 2nd change Senior picking off 4 for 15. A baptism of fire. But from the visitors 50 stand for just 1 wicket we bounced back with some fight from the bowlers. After leftie Tom grabbed the first, Jake added another prior to three from the skipper. But only one further wicket was taken by James as the home side ran out winners by 4 wickets. Not the start we wanted but the fight from the bowlers was a good sign perhaps. Next there was a trip to known-quantity Stones who had been promoted along with us. This time we inserted the opposition to give the bowlers a further opportunity to continue their decent start. It proved a sound strategy at least to start with as we took out 8 wickets for just 77 runs. Bradley blitzed the Stones top order with 3-30 and cousin James got into the act with another two, But a stubborn 9th wicket stand of 66 held up our progress. James ended with 4-39 and his debutant younger brother Joe picked off the last man to have Stones all out for 145 after Jake took the wicket of the stubborn number 10 Johnson for 39. Over to the batters who needed to get back on the horse but a first ball Goldie for Joel wasn't helpful. And the loss of Bradley for 10 wasn't either, but it did galvanise the others. Our innings revolved around Jake who made a cracking 71 from just 75 balls [10 fours & 2 sixes]. His partner James added a sterling 31 before becoming our second lbw before Dan copped an 8-ball duck. Jack D joined Jake and the pair took us from 68-4 to the full points in just 29.3 overs Jack closed with 28no. So the 12-pointer had got us back on the rails ready for the Parish Cup-tie the following day against Greetland..

Matty came in for Jack C and Charlie for his brother Tom. With a third toss win in a row, Thomas opted to bat in our second match at Wide Lane. Sadly Joel again copped a duck, this time after facing 13 balls and struggling. But that unleashed a 65 run stand from Bradley and Noah from just 49 balls, Bradley the aggressor judged lbw for 56. But there was

little respite for the Greetland attack as Noah continued serenely, joined by the in-form Jake. They stood together for 23 overs putting on another 109 runs till Noah was caught for 56 [84 balls]. With James and Jake together again the previous day's exploits were in mind and indeed they added a further 22 till James was bowled for 10 with our score on 210-4 in the 30th over. Jack D also again proved productive but Jake was caught off Khan for 82 from 87 balls [11 fours]. Jack continued on to make 24 from 18 and helped take us beyond 250. Our final 252-7 clearly reflected the determination to put the defeat to The Foot well and truly behind us. The bowlers had also read the script and resumed where they had left off.. Jake removed the two openers for 19 runs in 5 overs before Thomas' twirlers ripped through the middle-lower order. His 6 for 22 rubbed salt in the wound and allowed Bradley and Charlie only 1 wicket each as the Greetland side collapsed to 100 all out in 25.2 overs. Job done, roll on Round Two.

After the 'rest day' Saturday [odd no of teams], we were again on the road, this time to Blackley. Golden coin-tosser Thomas called correctly again, and again opted to bat. Any fears the idle week would have a detrimental effect on our batters was soon dismissed as Bradley and Joel got the innings cracking from the word go. Their joyous 113 stand signalled better form for Joel who made 24 from 51 balls. This week the duck settled on Noah's pond after just two balls, but form man Jake was once again imperious . Bradley again passed 50 finally falling for 88 from 66 balls [11 fours, 5 sixes]. James again combined seamlessly with long time buddy Jake to another 112 runs to propel our tally skyward to 227-4 when he was out for 57 from 54 balls. Both Jake [62] and Jack D [2] fell very soon afterwards to leave Ellis and young Joe to see where we could get to. Quality batting ensued with 23 no from Ellis and 12 no for Joe. The final 289-6 was very acceptable as our season's run tally continued to mount, Thomas again found the spin he needed to take 3-38 but was outshone by Noah's offies which brought him 4-37 making up for his duck. There was a wicket each for Jake, Ellis and Bradley. Blackley scored at 4.5 per over but no-one passed 50 and they were all out for 183 in the 42nd over. The second 12 points rocketed us into the top half of the table with the Luddenden loss a distant memory.

On Sunday we faced a stern test at Premier League leaders Booth in the Parish Cup 2nd round. Jon Midgley [105] and Patrick Thomas piled on 161 runs for the fifth wicket building rapidly on the top four's earlier 153. The total of 314-4 was hefty and with no Bradley in the line-up [Charlie again deputising] it seemed a bridge too far. But what an effort we made in response. From 96-6, Ellis [59], Liam [24] and Jack D [49 no] pushed past 200 to finally post 258-9, only 56 in arrears of the Premier side. That's what happens when we lose the toss Thomas !! None of the Booth bowlers dominated and despite cup eviction the lads can be proud of their efforts.

Back at Home we again had to face Greetland for league points. The opposition asked us to bat first. A 40-run knock from Bradley was the significant element of our 62-4 . But James again filled the breach with 83 [101 balls] at the right time. He picked off 12 fours and 2 sixes as he lost partners down the order, only Jack D reaching double figures [15] in our final 183-9 posting. Haroon Aziz had done the damage with 4-49. Our attack is varied and each bowler entirely capable of dominating. This week it was Jack D's turn. His 6-12 from just 33 balls turned the game on its head, putting the brakes on the Greetland reply which tumbled from 89-4 to 116 all out. Jack had great support from Ellis [2-35] and the two Toms in a third stunning league win. The only danger now was complacency it seemed.

Thursday night's T20 Keighley Cup win over Craven League leaders Riddlesden was a comfortable 41 run margin as Riddlesden were spun out for 110 by spin-twins Noah [4-16] and Thomas [3-20] after all the batters added good runs to Bradley's top 41.

The final Saturday of May brought the visit of rivals Sowerby St Peters to Wide lane and a cracking match was fully expected. SSP captain Aidan Green won the toss and asked us to bat first. It looked like a poor decision as we reached 94-1 with Joel back to form with 49 from 67 balls. SSP's Jack Leonard had winkled out Bradley for 20 but then really got to work picking up 5-34 in his allotted 14 overs. Noah resisted with 36 and 2nd-team new boy Callum Hardy making his First XI debut [stand in for James] also shone with 21 no from 31 balls. We managed to eek our way to 165-8 to set up a tantalising contest for SSP with our bowlers, although Tom and Ellis were also subbed by Ricky and left-field pick Jack Ellis. Any hopes for heroics from the bowlers were snuffed out by SSP opener Hayden Bruce with 69 as the visitors sailed to the target in the 34th over to win by 6 wickets. We had suffered a losing draw to a team then in 2nd place in the Division with a weakened team illustrating that success can be a function of availability.

Next up was the VB T20 competition that we had won in 2024 and were looking to defend. We travelled to Ewart Street, Great Horton Park Chapel to take on Queensbury and the home side. T20 specialist Jake again was in master-blaster form as his 78 from 41 balls was the stand out innings against Queensbury. But the Mountain men were also clobbered by 51 no from Jack' 39 ball input. Our 177-6 looked secure and so it proved as Queensbury made just 120-8 [Mackay 33]. There was 2 wickets each for Bradley, Jake, Jack D & Thomas. The match vs the Chapel was closer with our tally halted on 164-4. Jake again led the way with 61 supported by Noah with 29 and Jack 28. Hustler led the reply with 29 but we bowled them all out for 103, bowling honours going to Ricky with 3-25. So we again made the semi-Final at Southowram against their lads.

June was welcomed in with a visit to neighbours Cullingworth, always a match of event status. We chose to field first on the narrow Royds field. Former Oakworth junior Will Rankin settled steadily to make 41 and the expected major contribution did come from Elliot Robinson with 57, although 42 from Thomas Harrison was a surprise. Our bowlers took out 8 of their batters as they posted 199 with back in the ranks James amongst them with 6-50, Ellis and Jack D with the others. But what happened next was brilliant. Joel and Bradley won the match on their own racking up 200-0 in only 20.3 overs!! Bradley smashed 131 from just 65 balls, seven of them flying over walls. Joel was no slouch with 64 from 58. Wham, bang, thank you Mam in what was technically a winning draw as we hadn't bowled the Cullingworth side out.

At home to Low Moor HT our confidence was high and certainly not mis-placed. The visitors asked us to bat and most probably regretted it early on. If last week's fireworks were exceptional, this week's were indescribable. A 4-ball duck for Joel was brushed aside by his partner Bradley. The Low Moor lead bowler Jenkins caused some problems as Noah, Joe and Jack all fell to him for low scores. But Bradley was still there just needing partners. They came in the form of Ellis [25] and Bradley's evergreen dad Stevie [35]. 47-5 became 140-6 and then 266-7 and eventually 338-8. What had happened? Bradley happened. 21 sixes and 18 fours happened in a blitzkrieg never seen before at Wide Lane. The Halifax League First Division had never seen it before either as Bradley smashed the League record with a titanic 241 not out. The Low Moor bowling card resembled the front line of the Somme with casualties all over the place. You must give the visitors their due though as

their batters stuck at it well. Six of them made 32 or more but none could go on beyond 37. Ellis underlined his welcome return to form with 4-67 whilst Joe with 3-22 continued to defy any doubts about his quality at this level. We won by 127 runs and our presence just behind Luddendenfoot and Sowerby St Peters was very noticeable.

The following day we tripped over to Southowram for the VBT20 semi-final. Yasir Mahmood led the Rams batting with 70 not out and had great backing from Sajjad [30] and Belfield [27] to tally 186-4 to put us under pressure. As good as Mahmood's knock was it was outshone by 89 from still on-fire Bradley. He had backing with 49 from Jake and 19 from Ellis. We reached the target with four wickets down and 10 balls to spare. A great effort from all to reach the Final on 7th September at Mytholmroyd for a second successive year.

During a developing drought situation, mid-summer's day at Great Horton Park Chapel was something of a harbinger. soon evident. With our batting still flying high and hardening wickets, it was no surprise we opted to bat first. Just as last week's events were momentous, this week saw our batting in disarray and with much gratitude for the 48 no from Dan Pummel against his former club. Chapel bowler Jordan ran amok taking 6-36 as seven of our line up posted single figure scores as we crumbled to 145 all out. Without Dan's 76 ball rear-guard action we would have been humbled. The line up included Brannan, Matty and Dan as again availability proved a factor. Our bowlers battled hard, none more than juniors Tom [3-28] and Noah [2-6] but the other six used were all wicketless. So it wasn't enough as Hustler [82] and Martin [51] carried the home side to a 5 wicket win in the 41st over. Very disappointing as our challenge faded a little.

Wide Lane next hosted bottom team Sowerby Bridge. The disappointment from last week was heavy but there was no sign of it as Ellis 4-18 and Jake 3-19 ripped the opposition out for just 68. That miserable total included 29 no from their number 9 in the innings which lasted 26.1 overs. We took just 10 overs to knock the runs off, losing 3 wickets along the way. A welcome win against poor opposition. On Tuesday we faced Harden in the second round of the Keighley Cup. Harden tallied a par 125-6 with former Denholme star Toby Priestley nabbing 44 whilst Ellis featured with the ball recording 2-19 with back up from Thomas 2-22. Jake again led the batters with 34 but our last wicket pair of Ricky and Liam could add only 15 of the 22 required to win.

The final match of the first half of the season was at the small ground at Mytholmroyd with Dan again in the side alongside occasional player Jacob Davies. It wasn't to be our finest hour. Bradley [24] and Ellis [20] were our best performers in a shocking 105 all out total. Our innings had been undermined by Shaw 3-20 and Earle 3-1. [Thomas](#) and Ellis each removed an opener but that was the extent of our bowling success and the home side cantered to the points in just 14.5 overs. Was this confirmation that our promotion bid was at an end? Possibly as next week we were to host leaders Luddendenfoot.

At the toss we asked the 'Foot' to bat which they did with aplomb. Whitehouse [53] and Hosker [51] made the running but a third fifty from Senior [56 no] began serious tally posting after Baldwin also made 47. They posted 288-7. A ray of sunshine did come from Tom R with 3-44 and Jack D bowled a full quota for 52 and 2 wickets. Sadly the brothers Powell shipped the late onslaught conceding 74 from their combined 6 overs. Our chase was soon stunted and we slumped to 39-4 and never recovered until junior last pair Joe [32no] and Tom R [21no] added 37 to reach 141 all out. The defeat was hefty by 147 runs.

The hoped for promotion challenge had indeed gone but what on earth had gone wrong? We had no short term opportunity to rectify things as the next match vs Stones was rained after just 11 overs. The following week was a spare date scheduled for the club's fun day.

So we entered August with a home fixture vs Blackley and hoping for a first 'double' for 2025. Maybe the extended break had recharged batteries as the batters posted 245-6. Noah was again our rock with 78 from 109 balls [14 fours]. The back-up came from Bradley's 42, Ellis 38 and 32no for Dan. It was what the doctor had ordered and now just needed the bowlers to finish the job. Tom R maintained his good form with his season's best 4-26 and Ellis continued upward surge with 3-23 whilst Noah again finished off the tail with 3-7. Blackley folded to 137 all out and we again took maximum points as well as the double.

With two victories already against Greetland we travelled with confidence to their patch. They chose to bat but a 4-ball duck for Asif came courtesy of Ellis at 1-1. But their remaining batters hit top form, none more than Khan with 76. 46 for Mahmood and 39 for Nawab ensured an impressive final posting of 261-9. Bradley and Joe each grabbed three wickets but Jack's full 14 came at expense of 83 runs whilst openers Tom and Ellis went for a combined 99 in 17 overs. Joel held his wicket for 43 balls making 25 but wickets crashed with regularity. Ellis stood firm with 17no but we were skittled for just 108. A 153 run defeat to a team we had beaten twice this season was hard to fathom, the absence of Jake could not explain all the margin.

There was a feeling of unrest, some with selection and some with captaincy and the cohesion was less evident. Next up was a trip to Sowerby St Peters who had remained in second spot all season. Their solid middle order scored well led by 56 from Harry Clarke on to a solid 194-9. 3-46 from Bradley and 3-23 for Jack D were excellent efforts. But the brittleness in our batting was again in evidence with exception of 43 for Noah and a welcome 17 no from back-in-harness skipper Robert after missing the season to this point. Lower down the order new signing Lucas Keslinke returned to action with 9 runs. The reply amounted to just 97 all out.

We hoped the memory of that earlier 10-wicket thrashing we gave Cullingworth might stimulate a form reversal in our next match at Wide Lane. This time we batted first and again found Noah with a good contribution of 30. Jake posted 50 and new signing, his brother Lucas topped that with 70 whilst Ellis again chipped in, this week with 34. Our tally was 229-7. Cullingworth got nowhere near that with an all-out 79 of which openers Rankin and Shaheen contributed 41. The collapse was engineered by Bradley with an astounding 6-11 with 2-26 from Ellis. Maybe that was what was needed, a local derby!!

There was to be a significant selection change as Acting Captain Thomas was dropped to the Second XI with Robert continuing his long awaited comeback. As the drought approached its low point the match at Low Moor was rained off with their score on 24-2, chasing our 286-7, another load of points likely washed away. At Wide Lane Bradley had crushed Low Moor with his record 241, this time it was hugely in-form Noah that did the biz with 77 and James 93 as the major terrors for Low Moor. Skipper Robert made 10 no from 8 balls at number 7. Thomas responded in the 2nd team with 37 at no 3 and 2-24 from 7 overs.

We now had opportunity to reverse the loss to Great Horton Park Chapel. 54 from Bradley and 45 to Joel augured well. But from 102-2 the innings fell away to 157 all out. An amazing bowling stint from Hustler of 8-38 blew the rest away. Both GHPC openers were taken out

for ducks but Beesley's 77 anchored their reply which suffered a tense finish as Jack D got into groove with 5-39. There was just 19 balls left when they reached the target thanks to no 8 Ali with 20 no. Good effort from our bowlers but they couldn't quite rescue the points.

On Sunday 7th September the venue was Mytholmroyd CC for the Final of the VBT20 Plate against Greetland. Our 2025 head-to-head was 2-1 with them and so a cracking final was in prospect. Our boys were on top form rattling up 197-7 in a superb 20 over assault on the Greetland bowlers. James led the way with 46 no as all our lads contributed in style. Bradley had 39. But the Calderdale side stuck at their task reaching 160-4 with four overs remaining. At this point there was a disagreement between the Greetland team and the umpires regarding an earlier declined stumping. This eventually resulted in Greetland refusing to re-take the field. Subsequently the match and trophy was awarded to Oakworth. It was a poor ending to a special day, ruined by difficult players.



On our visit to Sowerby Bridge, the batters as expected enjoyed the bottom side [already relegated] bowling. With runs all down the order the lead was taken by u-15 Joe with a magnificent 75 no from 96 balls. The lad belted 7 fours and 4 sixes to set up a 249-7 total. 39 each for Bradley and James with 36 from Lucas ensured the challenge was stiff . Frustratingly it didn't matter as rain prevented further play. And the rain had the final say as the last match at Wide Lane against Mytholmroyd was a complete washout.

Out-turn

Year	OAKWORTH				OPPOSITION				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
2023	1745	87	1687	65	1486	90	1786	81	20.06	16.51	25.95	22.05
2024	1645	73	1535	62	1380	110	1416	85	22.53	12.55	24.76	16.65
2025	1485	61	1766	73	1082	68	1529	62	24.23	15.91	24.19	24.88
Change	-160	-12	+231	+11	-298	-42	+113	-23	+1.70	+3.36	-0.57	+8.23

Of the scheduled 20 fixtures, 17 were completed to provide us with 7 wins, 2 winning draws, 1 losing draw and 7 losses, besides 3 abandonments. 133 points were garnered [211 in 2024], 63 fewer than Champions Luddendenfoot and 55 adrift of promoted Sowerby St Peters, with whom we were

promoted in 2024. We also finished below Gt Horton PC and Blackley, over whom we did the double. So we didn't get promotion but it wasn't a disaster to finish fifth as well as retaining the VBT20 Plate.

Fortress Wide Lane

At Wide Lane our form was still exceptional. Five of the 10 fixtures were won with just 2 lost outright [Luddendenfoot & Gt Horton PC] with a losing draw against Sowerby St Peters and 2 abandonments [Stones and Mytholmroyd]. Our visitors tallied 1,062 runs at 15.9 runs/wicket as our bowling attack stacked up 73 of the 80 wickets on offer. Their bowling return of 24.2 per wicket was 1.7 worse [11%] than 2024 in the lower league. In contrast our batters scored 1,485 runs at 24.2 per wicket, losing 61 of 80 [14% improved].

We batted second only once at Home, against Sowerby Bridge [won]. Of the 7 times batting first, we took the points 4 times [Greetland, Low Moor, Blackley & Cullingworth]. Our 338 vs Low Moor was our highest at Wide Lane in the Halifax League and our third highest ever [behind 458 in Wynn Cup 2001 vs J Nelsons, and 353-5 in CDL 2010 vs Bradley]. The two outright defeats were close ones by 4 wkts [Luddendenfoot] and 2 wkts [Gt Horton PC] with the losing draw with St Peters by 6 wkts. Our Home batting form again improved from 22.53 to 24.23, another 7.5% upswing. Our batters lost their wickets 61 times in a home season of dominance [34%] on Eric's tracks that are beginning to offer truer bounce. So our cricket at Wide Lane remained good with improvement in most stats.

Luddendenfoot as a very good eleven showed us where we need to be to compete in the Premier League and our excellent showing against Champions Booth augers very well for that prospect.

On our bikes

Travelling across the HCL, we found the real toughness of the First Division, taking just 2 wins [Stones & Blackley] and one winning draw [at Cullingworth] whilst the matches at Low Moor and Sowerby Bridge were abandoned mid-match as draws. Five defeats all came in the summer after we had won the VBT20 semi-final at Southowram. In the ten matches we accumulated 1,766 runs [our highest since 2018] and our fourth highest ever. We managed to restrict our hosts to 1,529 at 24.9 per wicket, which we just failed to match with 24.2. Where we lost matches seems to be from loss of 73 wickets compared to the 62 by our opponents. In the ten matches we batted first 5 times and second five times, one win and two winning draws coming when chasing. Four of the defeats were heavy; 8 wickets [Mytholmroyd], 147 runs [Luddendenfoot], 153 runs [Greetland] and 97 runs [St Peters] and in all five we were bowled all out whilst the hosts dropped just 32 scalps to our attack.

So initial analysis indicates bowling away from Home may have been a primary weakness, However, it doesn't explain why or how. Were the best bowlers available to play, or off-form, or was their usage by the captain questionable? The table on p8 sheds light on this.

The most obvious observation is that availability was indeed a factor which clearly reduced options for the captain. The absence of Jake for three of these matches underlines this point, as absence of three pace bowlers at St Peters also shows. But those playing did a sterling job keeping their quality side to under 200. That defeat really has to be at the door of the batters for their reply, but unavailability clearly contributed. The match at Mytholmroyd was also down to the batters who gave the bowlers very little to protect and once initial overs were unproductive it was no surprise they knocked off the runs at 7 per over. Similarly 145 at GHPC was not terrific but was do-able so again the batters must take some of the blame as should the bowlers with only 5 wickets and indeed the absences of Ellis and Jack may have tipped the balance. At Greetland the bowlers did take all ten wickets but perhaps their 262 score did appear daunting but that doesn't properly explain a reply of 108 but perhaps the bowling return of 6-28 by W Ali shows another viewpoint.

Bowling	GHPC	Mytholmroyd	Luddendenfoot	Greetland	St Peters	SR	Eco
Toss	won	lost	won	lost	lost		
Decision	batted	fielded	fielded	fielded	fielded		
Tom	12-28-3	3-21-0	12-44-3	9-42-1	unavailable	31	3.7
Bradley	8-28-0	Not used	6-54-1	9-50-3	14-46-3	32	4.8
Ellis	unavailable	7-27-1	7-47-1	8-57-1	9-32-1	46	5.2
Jake	7-23-0	unavailable	unavailable	unavailable	7-30-1	84	3.8
James	3-24-0	Not used	4-36-0	Not used	unavailable	-	8.6
Joe	2-7-0	unavailable	2-38-0	5-14-3	unavailable	54	8.8
Pace	32-110-3	10-48-1	31-219-5	31-163-8	30-108-5	40	5.0
Thomas	7-32-0	3-24-1	Not used	Not used	4-25-0	84	5.8
Jack	unavailable	unavailable	14-52-2	14-83-1	6-23-3	34	4.6
Noah	1.4-6-2	1.5-36-0	Not used	Not used	5-34-1	17	9.0
Spin	8.4-38-2	4,5-60-1	14-52-2	14-83-1	15-82-4	28	5.7
TOTAL	40.4-148-5	14.5-108-2	45-271-7	45-246-10	45-190-9	36	5.2

Despite blame being partly at the door of batters, the bowling unit economy of 5.2 and strike rate of 36 are below that of recent seasons. Also evident is a reduced potency from Thomas, perhaps weighed down by captancy pressures. He bowled just 14 overs taking just 1 wicket, not the Thomas we have been used to in recent seasons. So the answer is a combination of all the factors investigated. The issue of player availability arose on 25 occasions when a 2nd XI stand-in was required and twice other non-regular players were used [Jack Ellis & Jacob Davies]. This is not a phenomenon solely applicable to Oakworth but clustered absences are particularly detrimental to winning against tough opposition.

Batting

The weather for most of the 2025 season was warm and dry in stark contrast to 2024. The wickets were bone hard much earlier than usual and with more consistent bounce at Wide Lane the conditions were set to favour the batters. Visitors to Wide Lane found their tallies on the up at 15.9 RPW from 12.6 in 2024 but ironically the only team to pass 200 was Low Morr with 211 but they were chasing our 338!! The nine visitors tally of 1,082 runs includes just 40 from the abandoned match with Stones and zero from the Mytholmroyd washout. Nevertheless the remaining 8 matches averaged just 130 with low scores from Sowerby Bridge [68] and Cullingworth [79] instrumental.

Our own batting on our own midden was 1,485 down 160 as we batted just 8 times to produce the 24.34 RPW and 23% dominance, much of which though came from Bradley's amazing league record 241. But away from home, despite failings in defeats, our batters maintained 2024 form with 24.2, down just 0.6 and 2% behind our hosts. This shows we are capable of success in this Division.

Overall run scoring was actually 71 higher than in 2024 despite 2 fewer fixtures. Our boys batted 20 times and totalled 3,251 runs losing one fewer wicket, just 134 wickets to produce a form guide of 24.3, 0.7 higher than in 2024. But our impact on opponents was also improved as they scored 2,611 runs and conceded 130 wickets. And a form guide of 20.1, a whopping 4.2 adrift of our efforts.

Bowling

Our varied bowling attack captured 130 wickets in 17 fully completed matches. An average of 7.6 per match at an average cost of a fraction over 20 runs. We took 68 wickets at home and 62 away, whilst our opponents figures were 61 at Wide Lane and 73 on their strips. Oakworth bowlers took wickets at cost 15.9 runs at Wide Lane and 24.9 away from home.

Overall

The season's picture is one of continued all-round dominance at Wide Lane, by both batters and bowlers whilst away from home both our batters and bowlers matched our hosts, Our average score was 163, up 4 from 2024 whereas our opponents managed 130, down 10.

A fifth-place finish was a pretty good out-turn, but was set back by that mid-summer wobble of five defeats. We now know where we stand and where we need to improve and reach a competitive level for the Premier League. The cup-tie at Booth should give us great confidence that we can make the improvements necessary. And of course we are still VBT20 Plate holders.

Batters

When you follow up a century with a League record 241 run innings vs Low Moor HT, the highest in the entire county, you are in fine form. The 2025 season for Bradley Powell was such an occasion. His season's tally was 840 runs from 18 innings at an average of 52.50, the third highest in the Division. In addition to his two centuries he also added a further four 50s. There were 106 fours to savour plus 45 sixes in his league match tally, and a club record equalling 60 in all matches. But its not just the base figures, his 840 runs came off just 573 balls, for an amazing strike rate of 146.

In second place was another Powell family member, Bradley's cousin James. He tallied 351 runs from his 12 innings at 29.25 average. His season's best was 91 in the reverse fixture at Low Moor, ultimately a victim of the weather. Stroke-player James scored his runs at 79 SR but still included 10 sixes in his haul.

Still a junior Noah Thirkill our regular number three ended the year with the third highest tally of 311 runs His 16 innings saw him face more balls than any other batter and he delivered at a more modest 50 SR but an invaluable total at the top of the order. His average was a cracking 22.21 for a 16/17 year old. He included 51 fours in a successful personal development year that included a best of 78 at home v Blackley.

Just behind the young lad was an elder statesman [38] of the squad, former skipper Joel Gallagher. Still after 440 appearances cracking up the runs, this year 299 of them at 18.69 at 65 SR, down compared with recent years but still a marvellous contribution. His best was 64 not out in the away white-washing of Cullingworth. His First XI run tally of 7,139 now sits as fourth best ever by an Oakworth player.

Next came Jake Keslinke, last year's top scorer but a little down this year after really excellent first half matches. His total was 265 from 14 innings at 20.38. It was away at Stones in one of our away wins that Jake hit his top score of the year with 71. Something of a T20 batter of renown now he also featured heavily on our retention of the VBT20 Plate.

Our sixth batter with over 200 runs was back on song Ellis Marshall who usually batted in the middle order and reached 204 for the year from 13 innings. With consistent scoring he featured regularly. His best was only 38 at Home to Blackley, but his real best was the 59 he scored against Premier League Champions, Booth CC in the Parish Cup 2nd round. His league average was a welcome 20.40 after a year of frustration in 2024. An early season inclusion in the team for 14 years-old Joe Powell proved a master stroke with a steady season with bat and ball, culminating in a terrific 75 no vs Sowerby Bridge in September. His average an incredible 19.89 at 60 SR for one so young. It came from 179 runs with 27 fours and 4 sixes.

Next up with 133 runs was late-season surprise signing Lucas Keslinke, Jake's brother. He wasted no time in settling back 'home' with a 70 score in his second innings against Cullingworth. There'll be much more to come in 2026 for certain. His average from five knocks was 26.60 at SR 107.

Surprisingly down the list is left-hander Jack Davison whose season's tally was just 94 runs from 12 innings at average 11.75 [SR 40]. Jack is an experienced, quality all-rounder who almost took both

batting and bowling awards in 2024 and to find him so far down the performance list this year is strange indeed, possibly batting too low in the order?, His best league score was a modest 28 no in the win at Stones.

Mr In-between otherwise Dan Pummel batted 7 times scoring 80 runs at 20 exactly. Dan was a lone star in the defeat at GHPC, his former club, where he hit 48 no. He has flitted between the 1st and 2nd teams as required. Almost out of action completely, injured for most of the season Captain Robert Hollingsworth finally got back onto action scoring 60 runs in 5 visits to the crease, signalling his usual intent, he belted 8 fours and 3 sixes The team also had input from Thomas with the bat, but curtailed at just 39 runs [9 innings]. His tally was matched by Stevie Powell including 35 when he supported son Bradley in his titanic 241 innings vs Low Moor. Tom Raby 27, Brannan Lawn 15, Matty Lee 14 & Jack Cawood also helped the cause.

Bowlers

Top bowler in 2025 was Ellis. His 21 wickets from 101 overs was a very welcome return to his best form following an indifferent 2024, His ankle issues seem behind him and his vastly better form echoes a similar story with his batting. Ellis best return was his 4-18 to demolish Sowerby Bridge. Overall his Strike Rate was 29 with Economy of 4.0 per over, both excellent left-hander out-turns. To underline Ellis' value to the side his consistency was superb, frequently as an opener, with only two stints going wicketless. The whole picture comes together in a great average of 19.38.

Marginally behind Ellis, also with 21 wickets at a slightly higher average, comes the workhorse of the attack in Bradley. He bowled 117.1 overs including 26 maidens conceding 441 runs at an average of exactly 21. He reserved his best for local rivals Cullingworth grabbing a remarkable 6-11 to have them all out for 79 at Wide Lane. Bradley's right-arm pace generated a slightly better Economy than Ellis of 3.8 but a higher strike rate of 33.

Again in contention as leading bowler is Jack whose spin garnered him 20 wickets from 75.1 overs. Jack's bowling can really bamboozle at its best as Greetland will testify from their Wide Lane visit when his 6-12 completely scuppered their chase. Spinners either break partnerships, keep batsmen subdued or get blasted across all parts. Jack keeps these out-turns in good balance with a great 2025 Strike Rate of 23 and a decent Economy of 4.1, both combining in an average of 15.25.

So we have three terrific bowlers sharing 62 wickets leading our 2025 attack. But it doesn't stop there as next up we have 17 years-old Tom Raby, another rapid leftie, with 15 wickets from 97 overs. As we entered the Halifax League, Tom burst on the scene with a couple of stunning 7-fors in the lower Division. He now opens the bowling and is fast learning to deal with the higher quality batsmen of the First Division. This year his Economy remains good at 3.7 though his Strike Rate has slipped a little to 39. Blackley felt his pace and accuracy at Wide Lane from his best return this year of 4-26. His average dipped a little to 23.93 in face of better batsmen, as he adjusted to their quality.

With 12 wickets from 68 overs bowled in 16 matches, Jake may feel disappointed following his 30 in 2024 when he bowled 125 overs. His Strike Rate has worsened from 25 to 34 and his Economy from 2.7 to 3.4 and so his average fell from 11.27 to 19.50. He may have been under-bowled this year but like Tom he has been adjusting to life in the bigger league as a bustling nagging-length bowler where all bowlers figures will and do dip against better batting techniques. But there are many who will still envy an average below 20. Jake's 2025 best of 3-19 came at home to Sowerby Bridge.

If you had a bowler who could take 11 wickets in just 20 overs you would feel blessed. Well this year we have had, still a junior, Noah Thirkill who did just that. A Strike Rate of 11 is unbelievably fantastic bought by a generous Economy of 6.7 but clearly hugely productive for the team. He was often used to clean up tails when the slogging was on but his average of 12.55 was the best in the squad. Noah announced his 2025 bowling with his best stint, a cracking 4-37 at Blackley from just 35 balls bowled. He actually bettered that in the Keighley Cup win over Riddlesden with 4-16. Noah's rise may also have been a factor in the decline in Thomas results this year.

Also on 11 wickets was James, his coming from 26.1 overs. He too had a brilliant Strike Rate taking a wicket every 14 balls, and as Noah at a price of 6.9 runs an over. But again a most welcome contribution. James really showed his bowling mettle against Cullingworth on their track with 6-50 before our batters pulverised them yet further. An average of 16.45 is most acceptable. Again a great asset to have and possibly also under-bowled

Oakworth CC is not used to seeing Thomas down at eighth on the wicket-taking list, but in 2025 that's where he settled. Only 9 wickets came his way from 46 overs bowled [38 from 113.3 in 2024] on bone-hard pitches, Ironically his best performance was 3-34 against Division winners Luddendenfoot in our first match and heavily lost. Thomas is renowned for taking wickets in clusters, 6 or 7 a match not unusual. So what changed? In a word.... Captaincy. With the almost season-long injury to Robert, Thomas took the reins with little previous experience as a junior or senior. The First Division of the Halifax League is without doubt a tough cookie to crumble and its probable the uphill fight took its toll, With a few matches of the year remaining Thomas was selected for the Second team and immediately scored 37 [at no 3] and took 2 wickets. It perhaps shows the gulf in quality between the two levels.

2025 debutant, 15 years old Joe Powell was also used as a pace bowler and he snaffled 7 wickets from his 21.4 overs, conceding just 106 runs for an eye-popping 14.14 average [SR 19 and Eco 4.9]. The future is not Orange its two-tone blue! His best was 3-14 at Greetland, a ground he took some hammer on in a Second team game some while back. Good on yer Joe!

The squad was supplemented by other bowlers when needed. Ricky [2] and Callum [1] responded..

Fielding

This year Noah led the fielders with 9 catches ahead of Jack [8] and Thomas [6]. Unfortunately Play-Cricket does not record dropped or missed chances, which some have suggested were higher than normal this year. Jack Cawood managed 10 victims behind the timbers [8ct and 2st]

Availability

Player	Maximum	Appeared	Unavailable	Available
Bradley	19	19	0	100%
Joel	19	18	1	95%
Noah	19	17	2	89%
Ellis	19	17	2	89%
Jake	19	16	3	84%
Thomas	16 [3 x 2 nd XI]	16	0	100%
Joe	18 [1 x 2 nd XI]	15	3	84%
Jack D	19	15	4	79%
Tom	19	15	4	79%
James	19	14	5	74%
Jack C	19	12	7	63%
Robert	6 [13 injured]	6	0	100%
Lucas	5 [new signing]	5	0	100%
1st XI squad	216	185	31	84%
2nd XI squad		22		15%
Others		2		1%
TOTAL		209		100%

Player availability is referred to many times. This table shows its extent against a maximum 19 league appearance level of 209 places It shows a 16% make up from outside the 1st XI squad.

2026 and beyond+++

The strategic 5-year plan to gain promotion to the Premier League within 5 years is still progressing despite this year of new experience. The squad remains youthful in essence with experience lurking in Robert, Joel and Jack C. The skipper will be 40 years-old at the end of the 2026 season whilst

evergreen opener Joel is a year younger. Jack will be 35 years old at the start of 2026 season. Inevitably these three stalwarts will be under review as to whether the time has come to retire or more likely drop into the second team to assist young players coming through from the 3rd team and junior conveyor belt.

So how might the team line up in 2026?

Much may depend on how these three, as experienced mentors for the younger players, feel about continuation as well as how the 2026 Captain envisages the squad to take the club into the Premier League. And of course the name of the Captain has yet to be confirmed. In addition to Robert, Thomas & Joel, 30 years-old Jack D has dabbled with captaincy and may wish to try full control. What is clear is that we continue to have a highly talented squad of really exciting young players. The off-spin role rests between Noah and Thomas whilst the pace attack seems well balanced with left and right handed options. There may be some pressure on the wicket-keeping position as the signing of Lucas could facilitate a place for a batter. In the Second XI squad Callum will be looking to further enhance his career as he is now established in Taverners & Regional North squads. He may push for a batting place on merit, as may Charlie Raby, who has re-constructed his batting to head the 2nd team averages in 2025.

Tackling Division One again will bring some known club quantities back into opposition with Clayton, Southwram and Mount in the 2026 line up. Warley & Elland will also participate.

Down the line several losses of players occurred pre-season with Akeel, Ayaan, Bilaal, Charlie S, Dawud, Elis, Louis Rob G and Saad all looking elsewhere for cricket or other experiences, whilst Subhaan was unavailable all year due to personal and work commitments, as was Asim until late in the season. There were some seasoned newcomers in Azri, George, James, Michael W, Rahim, Russel & Waleed, whilst there was a very welcome return to the fold for Scott Dyson.

Further still down the line though we can take heart at the emergence of Charlie Lee, Haroon, Dexter and Logan whilst we still have tenuous links with Sam C and Leo M. But Daniyal, Daanish, Zakariya, Freddie G, Jack G and Zac W also could soon come into the picture.

Focus remains on restoration of the playing square and outfield to eventually meet HCL Premier League standards. The 3-year plan for the square has one year to run and confidence is growing at earlier than expected improvement. The outfield issues with moss remain although in part better since arrival of the new mower, and will still require a patchwork approach. a likely regular 'filler' job. The net facility has been refurbished and the scoreboard will soon follow once plans for improved security are implemented. The dominoes are falling into place.

As often said in this report, HCL1 is a tough competition. We finished fifth of 12 which is not bad for a first tilt. With demonstrable key match losses due to player unavailability combined with bowlers finding higher quality batsmen more difficult to dislodge and some captaincy issues, promotion was missed. The learning points are clear but historically we learn fast and there's no evidence to think we won't do so again.