

Second XI - The 2025 Season

Confirmation came in late 2024 that our Second XI was indeed to be promoted to the First Division for 2025. It capped a great season for the club with both senior teams promoted and the Sunday team just narrowly missing out on a second successive elevation. We had become used to HCL generally good tracks and looked forward to the challenge with a seemingly well-balanced squad.

Subhaan, Joe and Liam remained youthful members with Charlie R coming in from the First XI, whilst Matty and Ricky were experienced. Longer experience would again come from Michael, Stevie, Sajjad, Paul and Wajid; Shimm' seemed out of the reckoning. Dan Pummel might be available depending on First XI selections. From the Sunday team, Logan, Haroon and Cody offered prospects for inclusion. In early pre-season we learned of departures of Akeel, Ayaan, Bilaal, Charlie S, Dawud, Elis, Louis Rob G and Saad all looking elsewhere for cricket or other experiences, whilst Subhaan was to be unavailable all year due to personal and work commitments, as was Asim until later in the season. Pre-season nets revealed Callum Hardy from Sutton was joining the club. He was a Regional u-15 junior of enormous potential, having been a UAJCA 2023 Cricketer of the Year, but was he ready for action in the seniors? There were some seasoned Sunday team newcomers in Azri Mukhtar, George Barnes, James Connolly, Michael Wilson, Rahim Hussain, Russel Tabori & Waleed Mehboob, alongside a very welcome return to the fold for Scott Dyson.

In 2025 we were to have new opponents in Bradshaw. Low Moor and Shelf NHT to tackle. But we looked forward with great confidence based on our 2023 success but under no illusion it would be tougher. The disappointment was that the HCL had arranged our Division to comprise 11 teams and therefore there would be just 20 fixtures and two free Saturdays. After the first match was re-scheduled due to the weather, we would start the campaign at Queensbury on 26th April.

Michael inserted the Mountain men and saw them rack up 85 for the first wicket but Charlie and Dan each removed an opener to get us into the contest. But it was to be a further 76 runs before we took a third. It came for young Joe, courtesy of a first catch for new man, James Connolly. Joe and Sajjad each grabbed a further scalp to leave the innings in the balance at 166-5. But the sixth wicket pair added 47 for Queensbury to post 213-5, with no batter scoring over 38. Joe had 2-41 [8 overs] whilst fellow u-15 Callum conceded 40 from his wicketless debut 10 overs. Kirstin Smith took our first four wickets [Charlie 40] to leave us at 50-4. Callum's debut was just 5 before Liam joined Steve to push us on to 120-6 when Steve was caught for 32 [35 balls]. Skipper Michael was out cheaply with Liam adding another 8 to tally 40 before he was dismissed. The innings fell away with just another 21 added and a 148 all out total in a 65 run loss. Not the start we hoped.

Michael and Steve were both unavailable for our Home First Division match so Paul took the reins and also asked Stones to bat. This time Callum showed his bowling mettle with 3 wickets to post 3-40 [10 overs]. Ricky got in on the act and ended with 4-39. But from 40-4 the visitors added 67 and then 69 for the next two wickets. The tail wagged too and 176-6 became 195-8 to undermine the excellent start from our quicks. James Robbins was chief tormentor with 92 before becoming Matty's third victim. Charlie and new man Rahim bore the brunt, Paul and Charlie started well with 54 but at 56 both were back in the hutch. Matty added a run-a-ball 41 and Ricky 22 but the bowling of Tim Helliwell with 4-28 pegged us well back and we stumbled to 150-8 and a 4 point losing draw. On the Sunday we faced the long journey to Upper Hopton in the Crossley Shield. This time we were inserted and at 48-7 an ignominious exit from the Shield was on the cards. Ricky's 33 was too little too late and an all-out 86 was all we could muster even with Michael back in the ranks [a 4-ball duck]. We had batted for 31.3 overs. Ricky added 2-25 and we had the home side at

20-3. Upper Hopton required just 21.1 overs to reach their target with 4 down thanks to Joel Mason's 48 no. The following Saturday was our first free date and was probably welcome.

Back at Wide Lane we faced first time visitors Bradshaw who chose to bat. After Ricky and Callum's opening spells the visitors had 64-0 on the board but introduction of experience from Sajjad and Michael transformed that into 85-5. But not for the first time we couldn't keep our foot on the gas and Corton [30] and Cotton [52] took their score on to 160-6. Then the 28no from Mahmood saw it through to 198-7. Only two bowlers were used by Bradshaw to see us off. Mahmood threw in 5-28 and 4-31 from Firth left us in tatters on 71 all out, top scorer James with 16. We were at the bottom with just 8 points and out of the Shield. We needed a result, any result to lift the gloom. At the hill top ground at Thornton we were asked to bat first, not surprisingly as our batting had been seen as weak. Dan fell for 1 from 15 balls at 7-1 but then we started to build through Paul and James, now finding his feet. We reached 53-2 then James was joined by Brannan making a rare outing. Brannan [90] was next out at 202-3. The hard Premier League wicket provided him with 16 fours and 2 sixes from the 63 balls he faced. He was ably abetted by the solidity from James, who 3 runs later became our fifth wicket down for 69 from his 106-ball innings. The pair stimulated the lower order to continue to accumulate for our final tally of a stunning 268-7. The game turned into a run-fest as Thornton no 3 Shackleton piled on 141 from 111 balls and with 55 from Chauhan coupled with 48 from their skipper King, Thornton unbelievably reached the target in under 40 overs. We took just 3 points from the match for all our efforts on a wicket not suited to bowlers.

Away again, this time at the tiny Bridgeholme ground we chose to bat first. 61-7 didn't auger well. Another rescue act from another making a first appearance was Scott Dyson and he halted the rot with a 62-ball 57 not out as he also shepherded the tail allowing junior Cody to pick up 13. Scott carried us to 153 all out. Hussain with 4 and Mehrab with 3 led the home side bowling success. But we couldn't match it, Hudson 44 and Abbas 52 no saw us off in the 30th over for loss of only three wickets. Our next match at home to bottom club Low Moor was a washout amidst a drought! Just sixteen points from six matches was proving potentially disastrous. The Hedge Top at Shelf-Northowram was next on the agenda and we asked our hosts to bat first. We got them all out but their total was 193 thanks principally to Feraz with 65. Ricky and Michael each returned with 4 wickets from their 26.2 overs. In our chase Charlie was our impressive anchor with 71 from 97 balls, and with four other double-figure scores we got close. But not close enough on 176, just 18 short of a win. But we did get five valuable points. The visit of Sowerby St Peters was not likely to prove productive as they were in the top three. So it proved. They had us all out for 62, of which James made 31, everyone else made single figures, five of whom were juniors. Four wickets each going to Mahmood and Watson. They knocked off the runs in 10.4 overs, shared by those juniors. Logan and 13 years-old Charie Lee each grabbed a wicket. The match highlighted the issue of availability and showed that our junior conveyor belt was still producing talent. In adversity it may in retrospect have proved a watershed.

We travelled next to Old Town again not bristling with confidence but buoyed by performances of last week's juniors. Old Town opener Bilal Khan smashed a titanic 175 in an equally titanic 331, but the wickets for Ricky, Michael and Scott were supplemented by a brace for junior Haroon. Another welcome event. With the bat in reply we were treated to another sparkling knock from Charlie with 79 [6 fours and 2 sixes] and another 70 [10 fours] from junior Callum, we reached a respectable 220-4 to claim a losing draw and more importantly 6 precious points.

The final match of the first half of the season came up with a home match with Augustinians and we still had no victory to our name. The visitors asked us to bat first. From 11-2, James and Callum began to motor adding another 66. James made 31 but Callum was in fine nick picking off another

10 boundaries in his 67. Continued steady scoring carried our total on to 171-8. Captain Michael again bowled wicket-to-wicket and took 5-32 in his 11 overs. But arguably the telling difference was a stunning 3-25 from Charlie Lee. The junior Genie was not getting back in the bottle! None of the visitors reached 20 and after 39.1 overs we had the final wicket for a reply of just 125 and we had our first win of the season to climb out of the bottom three.

The second half began with the visit of Queensbury who chose to bat. Cue new beginning as Ricky and Callum blew away their top order with five wickets between them. Almost unplayable Sajjad grabbed another three and in the 32nd over the visitors were having tea having posted just 68 all out. Wow! We did though contrive to lose 6 wickets reaching 71 thanks to 35no from on-form Charlie. Two wins in a row was a real boost. Over at Stones we asked the hosts to bat and again found our bowling boots. 4-22 from Sajjad continued his form of last week and resulted in a posting of 120-6 in a re-calculated 28 overs following early rain. Once again the batters did the job, none more so than Liam who blasted 44 from 19 balls [4 fours & 3 sixes]. Callum [26] provided most support and we reached 121-5 for a winning 10-point draw. What a transformation.

Our first trip to league leaders Bradshaw would no doubt prove a sterner test, At 58-3 we were amazed at the contribution from Charlie Lee who had two of the wickets. At 114-5 we were in with a shout until no 8 Mahmood entered the fray. His 67-ball stay brought 106 before young Charlie had him caught. The home side posted 238 all out. Charlie Lee finished with 4-36 from his 7 overs with 3-56 from attack leader Ricky. Could we chase that down? At 64-4 it was unlikely but 51 from Liam, 33 from Ricky with 22 from Logan gave hope, But that man Mahmood scuppered our efforts with 4-26 adding to Firth's 4-39. We petered out to 160 all out but despite the loss had performed well against a top side. At home to Thornton memories of the earlier run-fest were distant as we fell to 109 all out on being asked to bat. 5-44 from Marshall and 4-30 from Shackleton undid our batting. The 32 from Charlie Raby was our highlight. Richs with 61 and Marshall with 23 did enough in under 20 overs to reach their target with 111-4 as we used 7 bowlers in vain.

The match at home to Bridgeholme assumed something of a 'must-win' tag and so we opted to field. No 3 Abbas got their innings motoring with 68 but the 32 from no 7 Ali was a hammer blow. The visitors posted 219 all out as James Lee's 3-8 came too late in the piece. At 38-5 the reply was in tatters But Matty was in full flow and with Michael runs began to accumulate. Matty fell at 97-7 for 36 but Michael with few partners left did add 42 to our tally of 150 all out in the 34th over. Another disappointment. Our home match with Low Moor had been rained off and so our first visit to their ground was a crucial bottom-ish-of-the-table encounter. Their opener Dowling threw in 57 and no 3 Green another 46 to take them to 115-5 despite early wickets from Michael and Charlie Raby. But then their wheels came off and their total tumbled to 138 all out. Michael claimed 4-42 in his 14 overs and Charlie's leggies 3-54. Dan cleaned up with 3-6 from 19 balls. The match was ours for the taking and an opening stand of 39 was handy. Charlie pitched in 40 to the cause and Dan 28 to give us a platform for the win. The job was finished by Logan [22no] and Stevie [17no] at 139-4 in the 19th over. It was rapid and welcome 12 points as safety from relegation was well assured as news of a possible points deduction for some clubs filtered through.

Shelf NHT came visiting with rain in the forecast. Strangely they asked us to bat. We lost James early on but our batters assume control. Dan added 54, Thomas fresh in from the First team added 37, 63 no from Callum and 19no from Stevie helped us on to a terrific 214-5. The reply began well with two wickets each for Sajjad and Thomas but then the summer ended in deluge and the match was abandoned as a draw with 7 points for our tally. The following week we travelled over to Sowerby st Peters, who had walloped us earlier, but our confidence was high in view of recent improved results. We won the toss and asked SSP to bat, The Sajjad and Thomas bandwagon

continued to roll with 5-37 for the 'Doc' and 3-44 for Thomas. Ricky picked up the other two as the home side despite 46 runs help from no 8 Westerby could post only 154 all out. We had a chance, although SSP still had an outside chance of promotion. Charlie Raby was again in fine touch with another half-century [57] to get us off to a good start. 28 from Scott and 24 from Liam boosted the steadily rising tally and Scott's not out saw us to 155-6. A really great deserved 12 point win.

Our final home match was with Old Town. What a performance came from Thomas against opponents who had scored over 300 against us earlier in the year. He rattled in a 6-22 tally in 8.4 overs!! And the other 4 wickets? They no surprise all fell to Sajjad 4-16 in 8 overs. Old Town were all out for 79. The chase had some wobbly moments but Paul [26] and Callum [33] did enough and we cantered to the win at 80-4 in the 19th over. Yet another 12 points at season's end. And it was the end as the away fixture at Augustinians was washed out as a 3-point each draw.

Out-turn

They talk about a game of two halves, well 2025 was a season of two halves as our star finished higher than most could have expected at mid-summer's day. The final position of eighth place was hard-earned indeed for a team under pressure for almost two months. We took 5 outright wins, 1 winning draw, 3 abandonments and 11 defeats. 2,619 runs were scored and 131 opposition wickets taken. Of our 119 points awarded, 59 came at Home with 60 on the road.

Overall, we undertook 18 innings scoring 2,619 runs or 144 per match [up 5], our opponents had 17 full innings and scored 2,918 or 171 per match. Our bowlers took 131 wickets whilst our opponents managed 137. We topped 200 three times, our best 268-7 in defeat at Thornton. Our worst was the dismal 62 at Home to St Peters. We batted first 6 times, winning 1, when chasing 12 times we gleaned 4 wins, all after June was out.

	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
2025	1079	71	1540	66	1119	65	1799	66	15.20	17.22	23.33	27.26
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	-177	+8	+4	-6	-82	-23	+489	-13	-4.74	+3.57	+2.00	+10.67

From the table above it can be seen that in comparing our first two seasons in HCL Second Division, the above stats show a marked difference to the much tougher First Division of this year. At Home all the principal stats show deterioration with the only bright spot the improved batting away from Wide Lane. However remember there were 2 fewer fixtures this season.

Wide Lane

At Wide Lane three of nine completed matches were won, five lost whilst rain curtailed the Shelf NHT match during the second innings. The match vs Low Moor never made the crease. Good news was that combined run scoring on the square produced an average of 244 runs per match [down only 2] despite tougher matches. 136 wickets fell, on average 15.1 per match, the same as in 2024.

On our own midden our players' record deteriorated slightly, scoring 177 runs fewer and losing 8 more wickets in the 9 completed matches. Their average match scoring from the 9 matches was 120 [down 19] whilst those of our opponents fell by 82 runs whilst losing 23 fewer wickets to return an average score of 174. As a result our RPW fell to 15.2 from 19.93 whilst that of our visitors again rose from 13.7 to 17.2.

The consequence was that our positive 2024 home dominance factor of 31% had been heavily over-turned to a deficit of 13% in a much poorer home season for our boys.

Away from Home

On opponents grounds we also completed 9 matches [rain at Augustinians], winning 2, taking 1 winning draw [Stones], 1 losing draw [Old Town] with 5 losses. On the road our total run-scoring went up by 4 runs to 1,540 whilst losing 6 fewer wickets [66]. Not surprisingly then we gathered 30 fewer points than in 2024.

We had no expectation of improvement in performance in the higher Division in our away efforts, but our average match score was a pleasing 171 in 2025 up from 153 [12%] in 2024. However our opponents average on their own grounds also rose significantly to 180 from 131. Credit for the remarkable turn-round has to go to our batters, scoring 18 runs more per match at an RPW increased from 21.3 to 23.3. The bowlers took 1.4 fewer wickets per match, with their RPW sadly massively increasing to 27.2 from 16.5. We had a dominance deficit of 17% [2024 positive 16%] on our visitors grounds, showing clearly the impact of the stronger teams..

Overall

Our overall key statistics make interesting reading; run scoring down 173 runs, wicket-taking up 2, batting RPW down by 1.56 [7%], bowling RPW up by 7.23 [48%], winning 5 matches outright [down 7] producing 67 fewer points [119] and culminating in an overall dominance deficit of 16%.

Appearances

18 matches commenced in 2025 with junior Logan and senior Sajjad turning out in 17 of them. Michael and James appeared 15 times with Charlie and Liam making it 12 times. All in all 27 players were used.

Batters

Our leading run-scorer with a stunning 388 runs from 12 innings at magnificent average 38, was Charlie Raby with his best of 79 in the away match at Old Town. Now settled in the team he opened most of the innings stroking 62 boundaries in an amazing conversion from bowling all-rounder to classy opening batsman with 3 fifties. The question on his arrival as to whether he was ready for senior cricket was well and truly answered by Callum in only 10 innings at Strike Rate 86 totalling 282 runs also including 3 fifties, his best 70 in tandem with Charlie at Old Town, With an impressive pedigree in Regional and Taverner matches he showed great maturity after a steady start. He also scored 21 no in his one match for the First team. Third in the run-scoring list was new lad James Connolly whose tally rose steadily throughout the year to 234 runs from 14 knocks. At Thornton he made his top score of 69 behind a solid defence in support of Brannan's rapid 90.

Another steady starter was Liam who crept over the 200 with 201 in his 12 visits to the crease. His one half-century [51] came at league leaders Bradshaw. His strike rate of 94 underlines his ability to transform the direction of team tallies at pace. Not surprisingly he was the team's leading six hitter with 12 in the season. His value though went beyond the on-field with assistance with the u-18s junior team. The skipper Michael batted 12 times, generally low down the order to tally 136 runs, striking at 86 with a best of just 42 [at home to Bridgeholme]. Just behind Michael's tally was that of son Logan with 124 in 15 knocks. He has arrived now as his average was higher than his dad's albeit striking at 46. His best 22no at bottom side Low Moor.

Three innings from Brannan brought 130 runs to the tally, 90 of them coming in his amazing blitz at Thornton. His regular inclusion would benefit the team enormously in 2026. Returnee Scott Dyson batted 6 times in his nine appearances and tallied a welcome 123 runs at average 40.75. His arrival coincided with the team's upswing in performance. His top score of 57 generated our win at Bridgeholme with 9 fours and 3 sixes. But his best effort was in joining and leading others in the formation of the 'mini-strikers' group which has brought a potential 40 plus new members into the club. Dan showed more consistent scoring with 116 runs in 9 innings. His 54 in the mid-match abandonment with Shelf NHT outshone his 48 against his old team at Great Horton PC.

Ricky is better known as a rapid bowler but also puts bat to ball in the lower order and this year has made several valuable contributions, totalling 106 at average 17 from 9 innings. His best was 33 at top team Bradshaw. Also in three figures, old man pf the team Stevie totalled 103 from his 11 innings. His top knock was 32 at Queensbury in the first match of the year back in April.

So the above 11 players all made 100 runs or more. 17 more players also contributed with a further 377 runs in 51 knocks. Of these 17, seven were juniors.

Bowlers.

Leading the attack was evergreen Sajjad 'Doc' Razaq despite a variety of creaky joints. He had a great impact in the late season improvements and match wins. He totalled 26 wickets from 130 overs at average 17.77 with a classic Economy 49 and Strike Rate 30 composition. A return of 5-37 at Sowerby St Peters led us to a famous victory. Next in line Michael with 23 wickets from 97.1 overs showed his bowling was still of great value to the side, despite his planned decline in his batting input. His average, a terrific 13.96 was a touch high on Economy but his Strike Rae of 23 was well ahead of the norm. His best of 5-32 came at Home against Augustinians and triggered the win. In third place the 92.2 overs from Ricky delivered 21 wickets at 20.62 from another excellent Strike Rate of 27. Late season addition from the First team Thomas grabbed 11 wickets from just 26.5 overs with his penetrative off-spin. His 6-22 demolished Old Town at Wide Lane.

These four guys led the attack and each took 10 or more wickets. But the back up from 13 others was led following a stunning introduction to senior cricket by 13 years-old Charlie Lee. He snaffled 8 wickets at an amazing 11.25 average from his 19.1 overs. A 78 Economy was a tad high but hugely acceptable for one so young. But his knack of picking up wickets every 14 balls beggars belief. His 2026 could be momentous, just ask promoted Bradshaw who copped his best of 4-36. For another junior, Callum, his pace bowling wasn't quite so penetrative with a strike rate of 53 and economy of 78. Despite the average of 33.86 his bowling often kept batsmen quiet. Clearly there is a whole more to come from Callum in this discipline. Some had thought Haroon needed longer to become productive and after a steady start he took only 3 wickets to confirm his promise might well need another year honing in the Sunday team. Logan's principal discipline now seems to be his batting as his off-spin was called upon for only 26.4 overs and a 3-162 out-turn. Joe played just one match before elevation to the First team, whilst Cody bowled just 11 overs 1 for 8.

Going forward

It is clear that there was rarely a settled line up for the Second Team in 2025, The primary cause was frequent unavailability due to First team support and player absences, see Table below.

Player	Capability	Appeared	First XI	Unavailable	Available
Logan	18	17		1	
Sajjad	18	17		1	
Michael	18	15		3	
James C	18	15		3	
Charlie R	18	12		6	
Liam	16 [2 injured]	12		4	
Ricky	16 [2 illness]	11	1	4	
Callum	13 [5 regional]	10	1	2	
Dan	18	9	8	1	
Stevie	18	11	3	4	
Matty	18	10	4	4	
Thomas	18	3	15	0	
Brannan	5	3	2	0	
Joe	1	1		0	
Scott	10	9	1	0	
2nd XI squad	223	155	35	33	
Sunday squad					
Haroon		6			
Paul		5			
Charlie L		4			
George		5			
Wajid		4			
Cody		10			
6 Others		8			
TOTAL		42			
Grand Total		197			

The use of 27 players not only indicates the amount of unavailability, but also the difficulty in finding cover by the selectors as around two players each week were required by the First team. Overall in 2025 there were 43 places to be filled from beyond the squad. The cover provided by Sunday squad members was of course invaluable but 21% of the 198 places on offer is too high a proportion for consistent performance and Second team planning. However we believe this not to be a problem unique to Oakworth.

The performances from Charlie Lee would seem to guarantee him plenty of opportunity for 2026. Haroon too is showing increased potential. Further still down the line though we can take heart at the emergence of UAJCA top U15 bowler Dexter whilst we still have 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.

How can the squad gain promotion in 2026?

Our first 'losing' Home programme since 2019 is perhaps *the* most significant factor in the decline this year. To lose more matches than we won is tough. Our batting performance is the root cause. our batters posted 15.2 runs for each wicket lost whereas our visitors managed 17.2. We scored 1,079 runs our visitors scored 1,119, our batters lost 71 wickets and our visitors just 65. These three outcomes pose questions for the batting line up. But we have to temper conclusions by

taking account that visiting batters improvement of 23 fewer wickets lost than in 2024 is huge and suggests deterioration in our bowling out-turn of 3.57 was an equally telling factor, at least matching the fall in batting out-turn fall of 4.74. On away grounds we see our batters posting narrow improvements [4 runs and 6 fewer wickets] whilst the bowlers conceded 489 more runs and took 13 fewer wickets than in 2024.

Taken together the stats suggest attention to the bowling should take priority.

Elder statesmen Sajjad and Michael maintained form and Ricky's return was only slightly down but he appeared only 11 times. The late addition of Thomas may already have filled the void for 2026, provided he does not return to the First XI. The primary need is a regularly available, consistent wicket-taker as a fifth bowling option. Twelve players were tried in 2025, with the most productive being Charlie Lee. As youth is enormously in his favour, it seems he has to be given the chance to be that regular performer. Charlie Raby and Callum Hardy would be back-ups where required. Obviously the progress of Haroon and Dexter must be closely monitored as they too may make a strong breakthrough as did Charlie Lee this year. Scott and Brannan might also offer input needed, if more often available, as might Logan. But should Thomas not be available we may need to accept 2026 might have to be a 'development' year with a successive relegation battle a possibility, and veterans Michael and Sajjad will remain under-pressure to maintain their inputs.

Should the First team availability improve the Second team needs may also ease.