

NEWSLETTER

Number 16
April 2018

A review of the past month, a preview of the coming month and more

www.hdvba.co.uk

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to **David Union**
for sponsoring this
issue of the newsletter

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

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SEEKING SPONSORS

At the Annual General Meeting the Treasurer, Alan Stephenson, advised clubs that, having lost two major sponsorships, we had the option to reduce prize money or increase annual subscriptions next year. Neither step would be popular but if we can replace those lost sponsors there will be no need to take either option.

Around £2,000 is awarded each year to the winners and runners-up in our team competitions - that is the Knock-Outs and seven League Sections. A further £1,300 goes to the Finals Day bowlers in our Pairs and Individual knock-out competitions. Entry fees go some way to supplementing those awards but the bulk comes from the generosity of our sponsors.

Armitage Leisure and Bluebird Care have been good supporters of the League over a long period and we have been very fortunate to have such generous support but we need to replace that £700 a year now lost. Lindley Bowling Club have stepped forward to assume support of the Team Knock-Out by pledging £100 sponsorship. We are very grateful for their support.

Are there any other clubs interested in stepping in to help? The Rose Bowl and Sub-Team KO competitions are still looking for sponsors which traditionally attract member clubs. What's in it for you? Well the sponsors get to choose the Final venue so benefitting from the additional bar and food business of hosting the competition final as well as the associated publicity.

The Inter-District team are also looking for a new sponsor which is more likely to be of interest to a local business. We are not a profit making organisation. All the money that comes in each year goes back to the clubs or individuals based on results. The more sponsorship we attract the more funds there are to be shared amongst our member clubs.

We currently have two vacancies on the League's Management Committee. It would be really timely if someone who has a real interest and gift for attracting new sponsors or grants wanted to join this group. Someone with those skills and brief could make a lot of difference to the way that the League operates.

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CLUB REPS CORNER

Hopefully all the good work you have undertaken during the winter months means that you are well prepared for the new season and you can now turn your mind towards the more pleasing matter of bowling. We know that many Club Reps are also Team Captains and also the other way around - you start off as a Team Captain and graduate (if that is the right word) to become your Club Representative for the HDVBA.

If you are well organised then all you have to worry about now is getting a full team out on the green for your first game of the new League season. Sometimes easier said than done. It's not warm enough to entice the casual bowler to come and help you cover for those superstars still hibernating abroad and not intending to return until the temperatures hit the 20 mark. This is when you find out who your real 'clubmen' are. But if you can't be keen and eager at this stage of the season when can you?

Soon be time to get those results posted and for those of you not using the online Bowlsnet service then have a think about trying it out now. [Contact Me](#) to get a Username and Password and then you can test out the results logging service before the season starts. It's not difficult and provides an instant update to the league tables and all the player averages. A number of local leagues now only allow results to be sent in by Bowlsnet and although we are not at that point yet there are many advantages to using the instant online service.

Club Reps need to advise their Team Captains about Starred Bowlers. The Management Committee have completed the review of each team's Starred Bowlers for 2018 and they can be found on the [HDVBA website](#). Starred Bowlers are only allowed to bowl for their club's top team and they cannot bowl in the 6-Man League at all. No 6-Man team has Starred Bowlers. Check out the rules about Starred Bowlers to make sure that you don't play them at the wrong time and incur points or cash penalties on your teams.

We are now accepting entries for all of our Individual and Pairs KO competitions for 2018. Bowlers can submit their own entries via the online system on the [HDVBA website](#). Closing date for entries for the Over-70s, Over-80s and Pairs is Saturday 12 May. Entries for the Rose Bowl and Lower Divisions Trophy are accepted up until 26 May. Club Reps are responsible for collecting all the entry fees from their bowlers and passing them on to the Competition Secretary before the closing date for each competition.

Now that you have the 2018 Handbook it is worth an hour of your time to sit down to read the rules and highlight those which need you to comply with to make sure that you are not risking a points deduction or a club fine should you not follow our rules. If in doubt contact any of the three secretaries to get clarification.

TRANSFERS

The Transfer Market closes on 1st April and the complete list of transfers completed during the close season so far is below. This list of transfers shows that New Mill have been the busiest club during the Winter break signing on three new bowlers and losing two to other clubs. Most new signings went to Bradley & Colne who transferred in four new bowlers all from the defunct Waterloo B team.

DATE	NAME	FROM	TO
06/10/2017	Geoff Haigh	Thongsbridge	New Mill
10/10/2017	Hugh Wilson	Greenhead Park	Almondbury Lib
18/10/2017	John Hodgson	Shepley	Waterloo
21/10/2017	Ken Atkinson	Lindley BC	Elland C&BC
03/11/2017	Barrie Fielding	Golcar Lib	Thorpe Green
20/11/2017	Robert Beaumont	Waterloo	Ravensknowle Park
29/11/2017	Robert Barlow	New Mill	Clayton West
03/12/2017	Malcolm Gilbert	Shepley	Clayton West
07/12/2017	Malcolm Slack	Ravensknowle Park	Kirkheaton Cons
13/12/2017	Malcolm Kewley	Almondbury Lib	Almondbury BC
23/12/2017	David Batley	Waterloo	Bradley & Colne
23/12/2017	Ian Hunter	Waterloo	Bradley & Colne
23/12/2017	John Pickering	Waterloo	Bradley & Colne
04/01/2018	James Unsworth	Waterloo	Bradley & Colne
07/01/2018	Graham Howe	Milnsbridge BC	Longwood
17/01/2018	Francis Kennedy	Lindley Lib	Marsh United
19/01/2018	David Barraclough	Canalside	Denby Dale
22/01/2018	Alan Bamforth	Linthwaite Hall	Lockwood Con
24/01/2018	Geoff Smith	Netherton Con	Lockwood Con
24/01/2018	Richard Chaffer	Skel Windmill	Brockholes
07/02/2018	Terry Dickinson	Holmfirth	Golcar C&BC
08/02/2018	Derek Gibson	Primrose Hill Lib	Lockwood Con
19/02/2018	Dave McClean	Golcar Lib	Thorpe Green
19/02/2018	Colin Hamshaw	Primrose Hill Lib	Springwood
19/02/2018	Garry Firth	Shepley	Huddersfield RUBC
21/02/2018	Andrew Porter	Greenhead Park	Milnsbridge
22/02/2018	Fred Hinchliffe	New Mill	Holmfirth
23/02/2018	Keith Herbert	Denby Dale	New Mill
06/03/2018	Peter Brogan	Denby Dale	New Mill
23/03/2018	David Parkin	Skel Windmill	Denby Dale
25/03/2018	Keith Sykes	Waterloo	Ravensknowle Park

MY BOWLING LIFE

We have put the 'My Bowling Life' series to one side during the bowling season as there is much more to include in our monthly newsletter. It will return in the Autumn. In this issue we include our complete team by team preview of the 2018 season including our tips for which teams will finish top and bottom of each Section. Next month we remember one of our redundant clubs and greens. Huddersfield Cricket & Athletic Club (HC&AC) was a major player in the Huddersfield bowling community for many years. Bob Swan recalls some of his memories from that time and Bob Haigh has taken his camera along to record what has happened to the two HC&AC greens and what they look like now.

DATE	NAME	CLUB
28/09/2017	Rob Edwards	Lowerhouses
29/10/2017	Stephen Cameron	Cowcliffe
29/10/2017	Gary Shaw	Cowcliffe
02/11/2017	Peter Beaumont	Brockholes
06/12/2017	Martin Robinson	Golcar Lib
16/12/2017	Alan Hollingworth	New Mill
21/12/2017	Tommy Whitaker	Netherton Con
06/01/2018	Peter Read	Longwood
06/01/2018	Dennis Hartley	Longwood
10/01/2018	Charlie Landon	Thorpe Green
18/01/2018	Philip Hoyle	Canalside
21/01/2018	Stuart Pears	Shepley
22/01/2018	Andrew Reid	Lockwood Con
22/01/2018	Joe Conneely	Lockwood Con
22/01/2018	Mick Conneely	Lockwood Con
24/01/2018	Peter Lord	Rastrick
25/01/2018	Tom Chatfield	Golcar Lib
09/02/2018	John Sharp	Elland C&BC
09/02/2018	Ray Berrett	Elland C&BC
09/02/2018	Andrew Balmforth	Elland C&BC
12/02/2018	Paul Bowes	Broad Oak
12/02/2018	Steve Pollard	Hemplow
17/02/2018	John Rushworth	Lockwood Con
19/02/2018	Derek Green	Lockwood Con
19/02/2018	Mick Boyles	Kirkheaton C&BC
19/02/2018	M. Brammah	Springwood
19/02/2018	James Burgin	David Brown Sports
21/02/2018	Roger Singleton	Milnsbridge BC
08/03/2018	Edward C Gray	Cowcliffe
12/03/2018	Brendan Barratt	Almondbury Lib
23/03/2018	Chris Holt	Greenhead Park
25/03/2018	Alan Phillips	Lindley Lib

NEW BOWLERS

Alongside is the list of **New Bowler Registrations** ready for the start of the new season. These are mainly regular bowlers reaching the qualifying age of 62. Five further registrations for Lockwood Con makes them the most active in this area whilst Elland C&BC have also been busy adding three new bowlers to their list of registered bowlers. The listing does not include all the bowlers already registered with Longwood and Lockwood Cons 6-man teams last season and transferred in to the 10-man league.

FANTASY LEAGUE

Last chance to enter the 2018 Fantasy League competition that will be giving away £120 worth of prizes again this season and we have already passed the 50 entries milestone which is well up on last year's record total.

The competition is only open to HDVBA bowlers with many good reasons to enter - here are six of them:

1. £120 worth of prizes will be won
2. £5 Well Bowled Sales Voucher to every entrant
3. Totally free to enter
4. Season-long interest in all seven Sections
5. One entry means you are in the season-long league and two Knock-Out competitions
6. Easy to enter with Lucky Dip option

It is so easy to enter. Just select one team from each of the seven Sections in the Vets League and every point your teams win goes towards your Fantasy total. You don't even have to pick seven teams if you don't want to, ask for a Lucky Dip entry and we will do that for you. Easy Peasy! Then you will have a team to follow in each Section through the season.

In addition two KO competitions later in the season just add to the fun and chances to win some of the great prizes on offer. Go to www.hdvba.co.uk to get your entry in now. You even get a £5 Sales Voucher to spend with our competition sponsor, Well Bowled of Luddendenfoot, just for submitting your entry. Everybody is a winner! Updates every week on the HDVBA website.

Closing date is noon on Monday 2 April. For those that have already entered then [Contact Me](#) to arrange to collect your £5 voucher.

YOUR NEWSLETTER

I am very grateful to David Union for his support of this issue of the newsletter. If you would like to sponsor our May issue then it costs just £20. Please contact the editor for full details.

MAY NEWSLETTER

If you have registered to receive the monthly HDVBA Newsletter then the May 2018 issue will be arriving in your email inbox by

SATURDAY 28 APRIL

Reserve your copy by registering at www.hdvba.co.uk

2018 SEASON PREVIEW

Our annual start of season preview of the coming bowling season starts here as we examine the credentials of all 87 teams in our 10-man and 6-man leagues. Going beyond that to put my neck on the line by naming my favourites for each Section title and then going on to use my great 'making friends and influencing skills' to upset many by naming my best bets for finishing bottom of each section.

SECTION 1

Last year I tipped Lockwood Con to beat Clayton West to the Section 1 title and the Cons duly obliged but I had totally misread the lasting resilience of Milnsbridge A who led for most of the season but in losing their last three matches gifted the title to their main rivals. At the same time Lockwood were on a run of 11 wins from 13 matches and could afford to lose their final match of the season at Golcar Lib and still retain their title as Champions. Clayton West's dire away form with only two away wins all season (only bottom team Shepley had a worse record) cost them any chance of honours and they eventually took third place.

So has anything changed from last season to influence the destiny of the title this year? Like last year **Milnsbridge** have lost an experienced bowler, they lost two last year but that didn't seem to hold them back at all. But you can't keep losing top bowlers and not expect it to have some impact over time and that awful final run of defeats to last season may produce a new season hangover and any delayed start to the new campaign could prove fatal. With the top singles bowler and the top two pairs bowlers in the 2017 averages it is inevitable that they will be sniffing around the honours again this year. When club bowlers start going in to print to talk down their own team's chances then I have to view that with some scepticism. A bit of kidology and I certainly don't expect Milnsbridge A to be far from the top once again this year even though they open their fixture programme next week by entertaining **Lockwood Con A**.

The Champions have recruited a number of new bowlers primarily to support their new B team but some will expect to be pushing for A team playing time. For the three seasons 2014-2016 the Cons had an identical 21-5 playing record which slipped to 19-7 last season. Over those four years Milnsbridge A have finished as runners-up on three occasions indicating their lasting resilience at this level. If the Cons needed any incentive to go all out for the title again this year then the fact that they will be aiming to equal the League record of five

consecutive titles held by Milnsbridge A (2009-2013) should suffice. They haven't lost any of their Championship winning team so it is the easy option to tip them to retain their title.

Clayton West have signed a good Inter-District away team bowler from relegated Shepley and if he brings his Inter-District form with him then that will certainly be a bonus. I struggle to reconcile the West's away results with their totally dominant form at home. They haven't lost a home game since going down 4-5 to Golcar Lib A in July 2016. Even that was a 4-3 game win and only losing the aggregate blemished their impressive home record. Assuming another strong set of home results this year and just a marginal improvement in away form would position them right amongst the title contenders. So I will be sticking with my 2017 top tips once again this time around, Lockwood Con A to edge out Clayton West for the title and make it five in a row.

Meltham A have finished in fourth position for the last two years and with no new bowler registrations and no bowler leaving either one would expect much of the same this year. Those last two finishes were just three then two points off third place as well but what extra do they have to push on from this? It is a similar story for **Marsh Utd A** with top six finishes for the last two years but are they capable of any better? I look for reasons to talk up both team's chances for 2018 but with no noticeable signings I can't find any evidence of potential improvement. They have probably already peaked and I believe both will be reliant on other team's failings to progress further and I don't see much of that from the teams above them.

With a sixth place finish last year and best points total for some years then the hopes for continuing improvement for **Elland C&BC A** are promising. Only Clayton West had a better home record than them last year and they could include Lockwood Con amongst their victims. All positive signs but the lack of a top 12 bowler in either the 2017 singles or pairs averages indicates that they lack that touch of something extra if they are to progress from their solid if unspectacular mid-table security.

Netherton Con A had a really rocky mid-season last year when they suffered six consecutive heavy defeats. It speaks volumes that they were able to arrest that slide by winning five of their final six games all against teams above them to end up seventh but still well short of the runners-up finish of two years previous. However reaching the final of the Team KO was a bonus and with two Bistro titles in the past four years the pointers are that they are capable of beating any team which is better suited to knock-out competitions than the consistency of league bowling.

Lindley Lib A were the deserved 2017 Team KO winners but their league form was disappointing following steady progress over the previous seasons. Promotion to the top Section followed by seventh and then fifth placed finishes promised much but they failed to build on that last year dropping to ninth place. With an away record only bettered by the Champions then they are obviously capable of a higher finish but a slow start which saw them only collect 15 points from their opening five matches gave them a mountain to climb to maintain the level of progress of recent times. With no noticeable comings or goings on the bowler front there seems little reason to talk up their chances for the coming season and maybe they are destined to be one of those mid-table regulars which in itself is a notable achievement.

Last season with a third consecutive bottom half finish for **Golcar Lib A** coupled with the subsequent transfer out of a couple of strong A and B team bowlers make a set of worrying signs. However their end of season form was excellent with five wins from their final six fixtures to add to a league double over Lockwood Con which are all positive portents. **Cowcliffe** had a terrible start to their 2017 campaign by winning just one of their first eleven fixtures and that was at home to bottom team Shepley to confirm my prediction for a bottom place finish. Not sure what happened then but they went on a run of nine consecutive home wins to gradually edge their way up to secure a remarkable tenth place finish.

The end of the 2017 season couldn't come soon enough for **Waterloo** as they stumbled to safety despite losing 8 of their final 10 fixtures. Those two wins were crucially at home against the two relegated teams and it could so easily have been a very different outcome. The demise of their B team will cost them the availability of their back up bowlers and team raising problems were not confined to the B team last year as the A side failed to field a full ten in three of their matches. They have made a good capture from Shepley to boost their playing numbers but the signs are worrying. Three 7-2 wins in their last seven games enabled **Almondbury BC A** to avoid the drop and an immediate return to Section 2. With no transfer activity on the A team front they can only look forward to another difficult campaign and I really fear for their continuing membership of the top section.

Section 1 bowling standards are nothing new to either of the promoted teams as the A teams from **Brockholes and Thongsbridge** regularly flip between Sections 1 and 2. Usually they celebrate a second season at the top level before dropping again and that would suggest that they may find two

worse out-of-form teams in 2018. I think those two teams could be Waterloo and Almondbury BC A and I keep coming back to them and alternating between which I think will end up bottom. Today it is the turn of Almondbury BC A to be chosen as my tip for bottom place this season.

My 2018 Tips

Champions: LOCKWOOD CON A

Runners-up: CLAYTON WEST

Bottom: ALMONDBURY BC A

SECTION 2

Fantasy League tipsters have gone full measure on **Longwood** for the title with over 50% of entries including them as their Section 2 choice. After dominating the 6-Man league Championship for four years (2013-2016) but being pipped for the top spot last year by Lockwood Con there is good evidence of sustained success. In addition they have recruited well over the winter including Section 1 experience and newly qualified bowlers from within the club. Make no bones about it they are going to be the team to beat this year. Anyone who finishes above them is likely to have won the title. The Section 2 race last year was between three runaway teams. Two of those – Brockholes A and Thongsbridge A – were promoted with the odd-one out being **Crosland Moor** who lost their final game of the season at Thorpe Green by 2-7 to miss out on an immediate return to the top flight. That left them three points short of going up as Champions but still 28 points ahead of the fourth placed team. They are the obvious main threat to Longwood and it would be no surprise to me to see them as one-two come the end of the season.

The only other team that could nudge their way into consideration is **Rastrick** relegated after one season in Section 1. They had won the Section 2 title in 2016 with a higher points total than last year's Champions so have to be respected at this level and as long as they don't have a hangover after their bad experience at the top table then they could feature. Coming down with them are **Shepley** who had a really difficult second season in Section 1 last year being in last place all season and eventually finishing 30 points off safety. Subsequently they have lost their top two singles bowlers who will be staying in Section 1 with other teams this year. It is difficult to squeeze out any positives from their situation and they are more likely to feature in the relegation battle than the promotion chase.

The two promoted teams are **New Mill A** and **Almondbury Lib** who were both relegated from this level the year before. Are they any better than they were then? Too good for Section 3 but not good enough for Section 2? Probably not true of

Almondbury Lib who had a Section 1 season two years ago but New Mill A have been promoted and relegated in alternate years for the past four seasons between Sections 2 and 3. Following that pattern would see them in the relegation places again come next October.

There are 13 teams in Section 2 this coming season with the remaining seven all staying put from last year when just 9 points separated these seven teams. So it wouldn't take much to juggle the positions amongst themselves but, having already settled on my promotion contenders, which of these seven are more likely to becoming involved in foot of the table matters? Well the following table highlights the last three season's finishes for these seven teams.

TEAM	2017	2016	2015
Lindley BC A	4th	7th	5th
Hemplow	5th	9th	10th
Skel Windmill	6th	8th	12th
Kirkheaton C&BC A	7th	2nd (Section 3)	9th (Section 3)
Meltham B	8th	10th	11th
Broad Oak A	9th	11th	9th
Primrose Hill Lib A	10th	6th	7th

So what does that tell us? Well it shows that both **Meltham B and Broad Oak A** have been in the bottom half each for the last three seasons, whereas **Lindley BC A** have consistently been in the top half. **Hemplow and Skel Windmill** have improved their final position each year over that same period. **Kirkheaton C&BC A** have made the greatest strides over those three years and may be best placed to push on to grander things still after a good first season at this level. I am discounting **Primrose Hill Lib A** after the upheaval of their second season on a new green after the demise of Newsome. Another season on that green should see them in good stead and I expect them to consolidate their Section 2 although I admit that the statistics don't really support this outcome.

After sifting through all that I am tempted to nominate Broad Oak A to fall through the trapdoor this time but the relegation of Shepley coupled with the loss of their top two bowlers makes me think that they are in free-fall and I fear for their continuing status at this level so they are my selection. After due consideration I am going for Longwood to win the title from Crosland Moor as they just seem to be a really strong contender very keen to prove themselves at this level but with bowlers who have performed at higher levels than this.

My 2018 Tips

Champions: LONGWOOD
 Promoted: CROSLAND MOOR
 Bottom: SHEPLEY

SECTION 3

With only five of last season's Section 3 teams still competing at this level it makes forecasting especially difficult. Four teams coming down, two teams coming up and then there are the new boys from **Lockwood Con B** to factor in to the thinking..

Let's look at them first then as Champions of the 6-Man League last year they have to be respected. The club has recruited well over the winter and look to have a very strong squad. Going against them is the fact that they will no longer be able to call on A team bowlers to supplement their team as they could last year when they played on a different day. Obviously a strong tip for the top and the Fantasy League punters favour their chances but with no 10-man league form to refer to it is a bit of a leap in the dark so let's consider the other teams' credentials. Me and my boys from **Kirkheaton Con** expect to be in the mix come the end of the season but I don't think we are any stronger than last year when we struggled against the good teams. Home advantage on the 'postage stamp' green is always going to be a factor and needs to be considering our moderate away form of last year.

Thorpe Green have a point to prove as they were mortified at being relegated as a result of the reorganisation last season. Their problems of raising teams last year because of illness are hopefully behind them and they have added to the squad as well. Their final day 7-2 win over Crosland Moor to deny them promotion showed their potential and I am sure that they will mount a serious challenge.

Of the two clubs that filled the real relegation places last year **Canalside** seem to have most to do to return to the level of three years ago when they were operating in Section 1. Since then have withdrawn three of their four teams from the League and have the unwelcome continuing distraction of speculation about the future of their green. They will do well to steady the ship over the next six months and I see little to support any serious challenge to top places this season. **Linthwaite Hall** were also relegated after just one season in Section 2. They had a bad start winning just one of their first five games and cannot afford such a slow start again. They have lost their top bowler to Lockwood Con so have much to do to convince this correspondent that they can complete a quick return.

Turning to the two promoted teams and **Golcar Lib B** had an excellent year for as well as taking the Section 4 title they also won the Sub-Team Knock-Out Trophy. Obviously a team on the up as are their promotion partners from **Almondbury BC B** who

boasted the top three singles bowlers in the end of season averages as they performed an immediate bounce back after relegation in 2016. Of the two Golcar Lib B make most appeal as a team on an upward wave but as for all B teams any demands on their players from their A team could undermine their chances.

Five teams retain their Section 3 status and with just 13 points between them at the end of the last campaign it is going to take some sorting out who will move on from that mid-table obscurity. All five were Section 3 also-rans the previous year as well with **Lindley Lib B** being the team to have made most progress over that time after winning Section 4 in 2015. Despite that they don't feature highly on the Fantasy League punter's radar with just four entries including them so far. I think they are probably better than that and I put them in my top three finishers.

The other mid-tablers from **Holmfirth A, Paddock and Ravensknowle Park A** all improved their placings last year but the Section feels to be stronger this season so they may have missed their best opportunities to progress last year. All appear to have retained their team members without noticeable recruitment of new bowlers so it is difficult to envisage any of them improving on last year. **Springwood** are the other Section 3 team retaining that status once again but they slipped down the table last year after being relegated from Section 2 the season before that so on a downward spiral it would seem.

So decision time, who to pick for top and bottom place finishes? Bottom being more difficult to forecast than at the other end where I think that Lockwood Con B will have a good season, have a strong squad and have a number of bowlers capable of bowling at a higher level. I fear for the two that filled the bottom two places in Section 2 last year and think that either or both of them could fall through the trapdoor again. It is a toss-up for bottom place but have to look to Canalside to continue their slump, sorry guys although my choice may be just the incentive you need to go on to grander things, you certainly wouldn't be the first team to do that on me!

My 2018 Tips

Champions: LOCKWOOD CON B

Promoted: LINDLEY LIB B

Bottom: CANALSIDE

SECTION 4

I am becoming a bit of a broken record in opening each review by claiming that this is going to be difficult. But it is. Half of the teams in Section 4 did not play at that level last year. Four teams relegated into the Section and two promoted teams to add to the six mid-tablers left from last season. Let's start with the two promoted teams, Denby Dale and Outlane who both finished more than 20 points ahead of the rest in Section 5.

Denby Dale have lost two of their Championship winning team to New Mill during the close season so that will not help their cause. **Outlane** have done a lot of work on their green during the winter months so it will be interesting to see if the home team can settle to their new surface quickly. Traditionally teams promoted from Section 5 tend to struggle with no team finishing in the top half of Section 4 after promotion over the past five seasons. With a strong contingent of teams dropping down a level as well it will be a surprise if either Denby Dale or Outlane can buck that trend, so to survive the season at the same level will be regarded as an achievement.

Waterloo B and **Bradley & Colne** filled the two relegation places to drop into Section 4. The B&C side had real team raising problems last season culminating with them failing to field a full team in their last three matches of the season, twice only managing to find 6 bowlers to represent them. It was worse than that really as their last four games were against the four teams also fighting for their Section 3 futures and in losing three of those four games sealed their own fate. In a Section where only 6 points separated the bottom five teams you really didn't want to be turning up short of a full complement against your nearest rivals. The headier days of last April when Bradley & Colne topped the table were lost in the disappointment of the manner of relegation. However the Waterloo team decided to call it a day and as a result their top four bowlers have all joined Bradley & Colne so promising happier days ahead. The Fantasy League punters certainly think so anyhow as they are the leading Section 4 selection to date.

Casualties of the League reorganisation were Brockholes B, Milnsbridge B and Slaithwaite who will all be displaying their skills at a lower level this coming season. **Brockholes B** were in the relegation places for most of the season but three wins from their last four games gives them hope that better times are ahead and I think they could be right as their first team have strengthened their pack on promotion to Section 1 and that is bound to have benefits for the B side as well. If **Milnsbridge B** are to enjoy any success in 2018 they will have to address their away form with just one away win all last season whilst their home record suggests that

they could be a major player at this level. The opposite is true of **Slaithwaite** with the worst home record in Section 3 last season winning just 4 of their 11 home games. Two years ago Slaithwaite took the Section 4 title only to come straight back down again. In that same year the B teams of Brockholes and Milnsbridge were top half Section 3 teams so make of all that what you will. As I said this is difficult. My assessment is that Slaithwaite are probably better equipped to bounce straight back than the other two and may be able to mount a promotion challenge but I could easily be wrong on that count.

Of the six teams left from Section 4 last year **Marsden Park** appear to have the strongest credentials to be taken as serious promotion contenders. Finishing in third place in 2017, one higher than the previous year and they flirted with the promotion places for much of last season and they had four of the eight finalists in the LD Trophy competition. All positive signs to take into account although the fact that they couldn't field a full ten on three occasions last year is a negative. **Meltham C** improved three places on the previous year to finish fourth at the end of the 2017 season which is exactly where they ended up in 2015. Being a C team has its own inevitable difficulties with bowler calls for the A and B teams cascading down to become the C team captain's problem. So to some extent their future is not entirely in their own hands so making it difficult to back them with any real certainty.

Netherton Con B regrouped after relegation at the end of the 2016 season and will look to push on from their fifth place finish of last year. They appear to have stabilised to count a 9-0 home win over Marsden Park amongst their better moments last year. Whether they can move on from that remains to be seen and I see no further signs of recovery for them to win my vote (or kiss of death) for 2018.

Well on to my Achilles Heal - **Marsh United B**. I've tipped them to be relegated for the last two seasons. In 2015 they duly won the Section 5 title and then last year they built on that move-up to consolidate their Section 4 standing. I know that they really want me to select them once again for relegation as a sure pointer of their continuing success, maybe I will. **Lindley BC B** had a top four away record last year but finished in eighth position. I take that as a positive sign following promotion from Section 5 in 2016 and would expect them to build on that and become, at least, a top half team.

Broad Oak B finished last year in the bottom four for a second consecutive season and I am struggling to find a team more likely to fill a relegation place this time around. That being the case I am moving my (dis)loyalty away from Marsh United B this season and tipping Board Oak B to struggle again and finish

in bottom place. Tempting as it is to follow the wave of support for Bradley & Colne for the top honour this year I have a sneaking feeling for Marsden Park and they are my tip for the title this year.

My 2018 Tips

Champions: MARS DEN PARK
Promoted: BRADLEY & COLNE
Bottom: BROAD OAK B

SECTION 5

What to make of **Dalton**? They finished third last year although a long way behind the top two who have both been promoted. After losing 5 of their first 6 games the boys from Dalton suddenly came good to lead a charge to the top. But they still managed to lose to the bottom three teams in the Section at the same time beating the top two! Not sure what to make of all that for a team that beats the best but loses to the worst.

The three relegated teams must all be a little surprised to see where they ended last year after giving few indications that they were going to have poor seasons. The **Rugby Club** in particular finished in 3rd position in 2016 so to end last season in a relegation place was not expected at all. Similarly **David Brown Sports and Thongsbridge B** had comfortable mid-table places in 2016 but it all went belly up for them last year. I can only see more difficult times ahead for all three although their past pedigree may see them recover at this lower level.

Lowerhouses had a strong finish to last year winning 5 of their final 7 fixtures to suggest that better days are ahead and they are definitely a team to keep an eye on. **New Mill 'B'** finished third last year despite winning only 10 games, only the bottom four teams won less. They won't care too much about that after finishing the previous campaign in bottom place so a great resurgence for them. The club has been busy recruiting new bowlers during the summer months which should benefit both their teams so another team to keep an eye on as early results could give a good guide as to their potential.

Primrose Hill Lib 'B' finished seventh last season, a one place improvement on the previous season. The potential benefits of taking on the displaced Newsome bowlers doesn't appear to have been realised so maybe a missed opportunity so no reason to indicate any improvement on last year. **Greenhead Park** appear to have a mid-table annual booking after four consecutive such finishes and it would be a brave man (not me) to tip them for the top or bottom of this Section.

Kirkheaton C&BC 'B' finished last year just below half-way even though only the Champions had a better away record than them. It wouldn't take much

of an improvement to make them serious contenders especially as their 'A' team continues to improve and raise the playing level in the club. Better days ahead for them me thinks.

Elland C&BC 'B' have finished in the bottom three places for the last two years and if **Ravensknowle Park 'B'** sort out their team-raising problems (a big ask as despite their best efforts nothing seems to have changed) then it could be even worse news next year. **Holmfirth 'B'** appear to be in free-fall and cannot go much further down before touching rock-bottom although I think the Park will be there before them again this year.

My 2018 Tips

Champions: DALTON

Promoted: LOWERHOUSES

Bottom: RAVENSKNOWLE PARK 'B'

LAST YEAR

I am just relieved that none of my 2016 relegation tips went on to win their respective Section titles this time around (damn Marsh Utd B!!). I can only claim to have identified one Section Champion and one relegated side from my 14 selections last year. The table below provides all the gory details.

Section	TOP FORECAST	OUTCOME
1	LOCKWOOD CON	Champions
2	CROSLAND MOOR	3rd of 14
3	SPRINGWOOD	6th of 12
4	ALMONDBURY BC B	Runners-Up
5	CANALSIDE B	9th of 12
A	LONGWOOD	Runners-Up
B	MELTHAM	5th of 13
	BOTTOM FORECAST	OUTCOME
1	COWCLIFFE	10th of 14
2	CANALSIDE A	Bottom
3	RAVENSKNOWLE PK A	7th of 12
4	MARSH UNITED B	7th of 12
5	NEW MILL B	4th of 12
A	FARNLEY TYAS	5th of 12
B	GREENHEAD PARK	12th of 13

I know that you can do better than this and you are going to prove it by entering a team in the Fantasy League competition this year, aren't you? Well done.

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SECTION A

The Section A competition will be very interesting this year with the withdrawal of the Longwood and Lockwood Con teams, who move into the 10-Man League, we have a wide-open race looming. The mentioned two have dominated the league title for the last 5 years and it will be intriguing to see which team will rise above the rest to assume the new leadership standing.

Shepley were the last team to win the title before the Longwood/Lockwood Con domination took over and after finishing third last year will be well fancied to resume their challenge. Last year they finished 9 points clear of nearest rival Brockholes A and 25 points ahead of Farnley Tyas in fifth place. With 7-0 home wins over both of those teams last year it is difficult to present any argument which eliminates them from top spot. Shepley, like Brockholes, have the potential to call on better bowlers from their 10-man teams and if either decides to do so this year then that could be a telling moment in the title race.

Farnley Tyas don't have the luxury of a strong 10-man back-up resource but they are definitely a team on the up after their promotion the previous year. However they will need to improve their away form if they are to progress any further. Just one away win all last season (at Thongsbridge B) will not win them any title in this League.

Brockholes A had a slow start to last season winning once in their first 5 games, they can't afford to do that again this year if any challenge is to be taken seriously. Yet they are capable of much better things as their final game 6-1 home win over Champions Lockwood Cons proved. I can see both the top two promoted teams, **Netherton Con** and **Crosland Moor**, having good seasons with top half finishes for both likely but it might be too big an ask at this stage to suggest anything better than that. **Skel Windmill** and **Golcar Lib B** also got promoted due to the two Section A withdrawals but retaining their new status is likely to occupy their initial thoughts rather than greater aspirations and to still be in Section A for 2019 will be an achievement for both although I think it will be a target too far for at least one of them.

Paddock are the perpetual mid-tablers having held that position for many years. They are the team other teams measure themselves against. Beat Paddock and you are top-half contenders. Lose to Paddock and you will not get above half-way. That's just the way it is and nothing looks likely to change soon. Similarly with **Thongsbridge B**, mid-table for the last four seasons but maybe that good away record of last year, the most wins outside the top four, points to better days ahead. Certainly I see them improving on last year's seventh place finish.

Milnsbridge had a good first year in Section A after lifting the Section B title the previous year but after a good start to the season they faltered later on winning just two of their final eight matches. After that consolidation they need to move on to the next level and maybe they will but their late form throws doubts about that.

A ninth place finish for **Clayton West** last year is poor by their standards after being a top five team for the previous three years. Was that a blip or the start of a decline? Time will tell but it is difficult to work up any enthusiasm on their chances based on last year's form. **Almondbury Lib** were one place above the relegation spots last year but they beat both the bottom two by 7-0 to suggest that they are well above that level. However just one away win all last season (at bottom team Primrose Hill Lib) indicates another season of fighting relegation and this time they may not find two poorer teams below them.

My 2018 Tips

Champions: SHEPLEY

Runners-Up: FARNLEY TYAS

Bottom: GOLCAR LIB

SECTION B

Twelve teams start the season in Section B of which three are brand new ones to our League. Two of those teams - **Golcar C&BC and Marsh Liberal** - seem to be made up mostly of novice or totally new bowlers and wouldn't at first glance appear to offer any threat to claiming honours in their first season. It is worth noting that the Golcar C&BC captain is Mick Chapman who won all his 20 matches he played for New Mill B in Section 5 last season. He assures me that the rest of the team are new and novice bowlers. If that is correct then anything out of the bottom two final placings will be an achievement for both the new boys.

However the third new team are a different proposition altogether, a new 'B' team from **Skel Windmill**. This team is expected to be made up of primarily bowlers from last year's 10-man B team who have withdrawn from that competition due to team-raising difficulties. Even with such problems they finished mid-table in Section 4 with a W11 L11 record which points to a level probably higher than most teams in Section B. Speculation about the future of their green coupled with the uncertainty about the future of The Windmill pub wont help their cause but assuming that is clarified then I expect them to be serious contenders for the title.

With last season's top four all being promoted that leaves **Meltham** as the top placed team of 2017 still in that Section. Having been relegated and promoted up and then back down in to the Section

in the previous two seasons they are eminently qualified to go up once again this year. With potentially a wealth of 10-man team bowlers to call upon I can see them taking this very seriously if they have a good start to the new season.

Holmfirth, Shepley B and Hemplow finished within four points of each other in mid-table last season. For **Holmfirth** that was a one-place improvement on the previous year but it was a continuance of the declining fortunes for the other two. That decline continued with the late withdrawal of the Shepley B side from the League. We expect **Hemplow** to drop even further this season whilst I would expect **Holmfirth** to continue their improvement to lift themselves one or two places up on last season.

Of last season's bottom four **Brockholes B** were well adrift at the foot some 18 points short of their nearest rivals. It is difficult to build a case for anything different this year but I trust they will still get the same level of enjoyment out of the exercise that they have always done. The three above them were **Thongsbridge A, Lindley Lib and Greenhead Park** and these three were the bottom three teams the previous season. Easter may be coming up and only a resurrection on biblical proportions is likely to see any of these three teams getting a top half placing although I wish them well.

Looking at the two teams to drop down from Section A I believe that **Oakfield** are best placed to mount a challenge to renew top level bowling before their fellow 2017 strugglers **Primrose Hill** who should still have a top-half finish in them. In 2016 Oakfield had finished mid-table in Section A after winning promotion the previous year. Sixth behind Longwood and Lockwood Con points to better than average and I believe that they will be involved in a three-way tussle for the top of Section B this year. The three teams I think will fight it out at the top are therefore Meltham, Oakfield and Skel Windmill 'B' with the last named being my tip for the top.

My 2018 Tips

Champions: SKEL WINDMILL 'B'

Promoted: OAKFIELD

Bottom: BROCKHOLES 'B'

MY SELECTIONS		
	TOP	BOTTOM
1	Lockwood Con A	Almondbury BC A
2	Longwood	Shepley
3	Lockwood Con B	Canalside
4	Marsden Park	Broad Oak B
5	Dalton	Ravensknowle Park B
A	Shepley A	Golcar Lib
B	Skel Windmill B	Brockholes B