

From Club Umpire to National Finals

A personal journey through cricket umpiring by Nigel Brook

I was asked to become the club umpire for Scholes CC about 20 years ago at a time when club umpiring was in its infancy and clubs were beginning to realise that it was something they had to embrace.

The only previous experience I had was in umpiring junior cricket so I was pretty green when it came to umpiring adult matches, some of whom assured me they were good enough to play county cricket!!

In those early days club umpires only officiated at home games and we were always paired with a league umpire. I received a great deal of help and advice especially from Andrew Wray and Gary Rank who both continually tried to coax me to join the panel. After a couple of years Ron Tindall got in touch asking me to do other matches when Scholes were away.

This changed my perception of umpiring as I no longer seemed to get the comments that can stigmatise club umpires about them being 'homers' or cheats, instead I found myself enjoying the role far more and, for the first time, feeling like a proper umpire.

After around 5 years of club umpiring I took the plunge to do the old level 1 course. This took place every Thursday for 6 weeks with an exam on the 7th week. It was hard work and I was amazed to find out how little I actually knew about cricket when it came to the umpiring side of things!!

The following couple of years were spent mostly doing 2nd team and lower league 1st team fixtures which were a great grounding and invaluable experience.

As I wanted to umpire higher level games I decided to embark on what is now the ECB pathway but then was known as level 3, this involved two full days at Pudsey Congs and an online course. After passing that I was mentored by Ray Bissett doing a number of games with him until he thought I was ready to be assessed. The help and advice from Ray cannot be underestimated and when finally, I was independently assessed it was nowhere near as daunting as I expected.

As a level 3 umpire I tried to do the right things in a committed and confident way to make myself a competent umpire however never shielded away from seeking advice from Ray, David Haikings and Ron Tindall who all played an important part in what I have achieved since.

After taking early retirement 8 years ago I joined the ever growing midweek umpiring circuit and now regularly officiate in County age group games up to U18, University matches and other junior fixtures.

In 2026 I was appointed to umpire:

- A national university semi final
- Yorkshire v Worcestershire U18's in the ECB cup semi-final,

- The Heavy Woollen Cup Final
- And to finish the season the ECB appointed National over 50s final between Yorkshire and Lancashire in Nottingham.

I'm proud of my achievements but never forget the help and advice I have received along the way.

The move from club umpiring can be daunting but if you have a passion for umpiring and a desire to officiate at a higher level all it takes is commitment and a love of cricket!

