

SPORT

Cricket

Chapple aims to answer the Red Rose's prayers

Lancashire coach Glen Chapple's message is clear ahead of 2019: "We have to make promotion our main aim."

Last season's surprise relegation in the Specsavers County Championship hurt everybody at Emirates Old Trafford.

It was made an even more bitter pill to swallow that they went down level on points with Notts, having won fewer games and been docked a point due to a slow over-rate in a defeat against Yorkshire.

It means that while limited overs silverware is also a target, the be all and end all is for the Red Rose to be playing Division One cricket in 2020.

Lancashire are no strangers to Division Two. They won promotion in both 2013 and 2015, so Chapple knows what it takes to achieve that.

"We're a big club, and every time we've been down we've managed to go back up," said Chapple.

"So in those terms, we back ourselves to be one of the best three sides, but we have to re-

spect the opposition. They're excellent teams."

Lancashire's disappointment came after a poor year for the batsmen.

Seamers Tom Bailey and Graham Onions claimed 64 and 57 wickets respectively, with the former the leading wicket-taker in Division One.

But no batsman reached 800 runs, with new captain Dane Vilas the best with 792.

He has replaced Liam Livingstone, who stepped down earlier in the winter to concentrate on his form.

Livingstone, however, will miss the start of the season having gained a contract with Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League.

Chapple, currently in Dubai on the club's pre-season tour, said: "Last season was extremely challenging for batsmen – seamer friendly to begin with and then the pitches never flattened.

"Losing a point on over-rate was disappointing, and going down on the same points was difficult to take."



Lancashire coach Glen Chapple

Motorsport

Green light for weekend race

Motorsport history will be made this weekend when the 2019 Legend Fires North West Stages Rally, in partnership with Simpson's Skoda, becomes the first closed road motorsport event to be held in North West England.

The rally, which aims to raise money for charitable causes, is going ahead thanks to the co-operation of Wyre Borough Council, Lancaster City Council, Lancashire County Council, Garstang Town Council and Parish Councils throughout the route.

Starting with a ceremonial start in Garstang town centre on Friday evening around 7pm, Saturday sees the rally start from its new headquarters at Myerscough College at 8.30am.

Competitors will then head off to the closed roads special stages, the first of which, the Nicky Nook Stage, to the east of Garstang, gets underway just before 9am.

Spectators can also catch the rally action on the Staynall Stage that first runs at 10am. Both the Nicky Nook and Staynall Stages are run

three times during the day.

Friday's ceremonial start promises a carnival-style atmosphere complete with the Samba Espirito drum band of Notting Hill Carnival and New York Brazilian Day fame.

The band will play ahead of car one as it reaches the High Street shortly before 7pm, after which the Town Cryer will announce the start as cars proceed over the official start ramp.

Rally director Dave Read said: "This promises to be the biggest rally start for a clubman rally in the UK and it's largely thanks to the efforts of the Garstang Town Council and the Myerscough College Motorsports Department. The local butcher is laying on a BBQ and the rally sponsors Legend Fires and Simpson's Skodas have lots of giveaways for the kids who will get the opportunity to sit in the cars."

The 120-car field includes some of the UK's top crews with the finish scheduled for the Myerscough College International Horse Arena at 5.45pm on Saturday evening.

Football

Ashcroft pays tribute as Town take monthly prizes

Longridge Town boss Lee Ashcroft paid tribute to the club and his players following their monthly awards.

Town's performances in February saw them named as the Macron club of the month in the First Division North.

Ashcroft's men won all three of their games in February, scoring 12 goals while conceding only one.

The month started with an away trip to Adie Moran Park to face Prestwich Heys, with Longridge running out 2-1 winners courtesy of goals from Ryan McKenna and Jay Hart.

Town then had a two-week break before facing Carlisle City at home which resulted in an emphatic 7-0 victory courtesy of goals from Danny Wilkinson, Tom Ince, Richie Allen and an Isaac Sinclair hat-trick.

Four days later Town made

it three wins out of three for the month, with an Allen hat-trick securing a brilliant 3-0 victory over closest rivals Avro in front of a record crowd of 452 at the Mike Riding Ground.

For good measure, Town also saw Tom Ince win the division's corresponding player of the month prize.

Ince picked up the man of the match awards in the three wins against Prestwich Heys, Carlisle City and Avro.

For good measure, Ince also got on the scoresheet in the 7-0 win over Carlisle.

Throughout the season, Ince has been a major factor in Town's attacking success, with him continually contributing in terms of goals and assists.

He also continued that form into March, contributing with a stunning goal from 25 yards out in the win over Atherton LR.

"Tom Ince has been outstanding for us this season," Ashcroft said.

"From the first ball kicked at the start of the season, he's trained well and got himself fit.

"He's my ideal footballer and he's a clever footballer for good measure.

"The players know what we have to do and they are a good set of lads to be around."

On the pitch, Town moved seven points clear at the top of the table after drawing 4-4 at St Helens Town.

Richie Allen had fired them into the lead before Matthew Smith's double gave the hosts a half-time lead.

Paul Turner levelled, only for Josef Faux to put St Helens 3-2 up on 54 minutes.

Allen scored twice in 10 minutes to complete his hat-trick and put Town 4-3 up before Alex Moffitt's late leveller.

Golf

Red Rose ladies golf is continuing to flourish

The drive to encourage more women into golf is paying dividends in Lancashire.

New figures show that the decline in numbers has been reversed.

A major campaign has resulted in an increase in female membership numbers in its first 12 months.

Latest returns from clubs across the county show a 1.5 per cent lift.

A ground-breaking conference looking at increasing the number of girls and women playing golf got the ball rolling last year.

It saw industry experts offering advice across a range of subjects including marketing, customer experience, social media and what young women are looking for from golf.

The work has been further supported by a number of county partners, including

the Lancashire Union of Golf Clubs, the Lancashire Ladies County Golf Association, the Lancashire Golf Development Group, the Golf Foundation and the Professional Golfers Association.

Phil Harvey, secretary of the Lancashire Union of Golf Clubs, says: "Once again we have been delighted by the support of the clubs to our plans to increase female membership and participation."

"The hard work going on to show the many health and social benefits of golf have been rewarded with an increase in numbers that is helping sustain the long-term future of our clubs."

Further details on how your club can get involved in the drive to encourage more women and girls into golf can be obtained from Debbie Barber on 07518 564113 or

by emailing dbarber@lancashiregolf.org

Lancashire's drive to get more people playing golf has seen the county nominated in the 2019 England Golf awards, sponsored by adidas Golf.

The Lancashire team are bidding to secure a double success, having been crowned County of the Year at the 2017 awards.

This time round they will face competition from Wiltshire when the winners are revealed at a gala dinner in London this month.

Across the board, the county is bucking the national trend with a total membership increase in 2017 of a little more than one per cent against a nationwide decline of two per cent.

This is on the back of a four per cent increase in 2016.