

Devon Cricket League A Division
Season 2019
Match No 6 v Abbotskerswell at home

*Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!
You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o' th' world,
Crack Nature's moulds, all germains spill at once,
That makes ingrateful man!*
King Lear – William Shakespeare.

The biggest surprise of the weekend for me was that I found myself at the Ho! On Saturday with the sun shining and ground perfectly playable -albeit one could hardly stand up against the Wind. The night before there had thunder (thunderbolts), lightening (*You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires*), and as reported by the *Somerset County Gazette* – a tornado (*You cataracts and hurricanoes*). Perhaps therefore the wind was to be expected – it also seemed to be of a mild disposition blowing any threatening clouds away before they could gang up to create havoc.

It was one of those days that one just felt the toss would be important. With a team showing the return of Tom Brend and the inclusion of Hayter Senior for Hayter Junior batting first, as we had done at Barton was a must. Abbotskerswell did the decent thing, lost the toss and they were promptly inserted. This was an immensely enjoyable match for many reasons – not the least of all being that Bide won by 6 wickets and claimed 20 points. It would not be unkind to say that opening bowlers have not been the starring point of the team – although in saying this I mean no criticism of Steve Bond, who has held his head high and taken as many (if not more) wickets himself. One must be honest and say that perhaps the most disappointing aspect has been Alex Hannam's bowling. He seemed to me to be straining to bowl too fast and in the consequence given away too many runs, and, particularly, no balls. However on Saturday Paul Heard asked him to open up the hill, and what a revelation. Gone were the foot faults and wides, replaced by hostile., accurate bowling of a good pace, to such effect that he had 4 of the first five batsman for 27 runs off 10 – more like the Alex of 2 or more years ago. With a smart run out effected by Martin Stewart/Ollie Hannam, Abbots, who last season appeared to be in a different and higher league than Bideford, were reduced to 45-5. Their opener made 20, and only one other batsman, who decided that hitting his way out of trouble was the only way to go, scored more (34) and the last wicket stand of 23 was the highest of the innings and one of only 3 double figure stands.

However back to the story. Jamie Lathwell took over after 4 overs at the road end bowled with reasonable pace by Ben Perry (4 overs for 16). Jamie has bowled superbly this yea rand though he only got one wicket (the valuable one of their captain, joining Abbots from Torquay over the winter) with his first ball – a dolly for Jack Ford in the Gully – his figures of 7-4-9-1 are typical of his efforts this season. Brilliant. Jack Ford took over from Alex at the sea end and bowled his usual accurate spell of 8 overs 2 maidens 33 runs and one wicket – 14 of the runs coming in one over. However, as Alex had demolished the opening of their batting Paul Heard did a similar job. Last year Paul was bowling with greater pace off a longer run up and was constantly beating bat but

was too good for the batsman and certainly was not rewarded with the number of wickets he should have had. However this year he seems even more deadly – as yesterday's figures show 7.1 overs 3 maidens four runs and 3 wickets. Martin Stewart only had time for one over before their innings was all over 100 – just a few more runs than Barton managed last week. The speed of the game was such that tea was delayed to be taken after 15 overs of our innings or 4.00 pm whichever was the latest,

Opinion amongst the Umpires that there was a lot of bounce in the pitch and that 100 would take some getting – 120/130 would be a nailed on certainty. I did not feel this myself, I thought that any team who could win batting on the minefield which was last week's pitch could survive on this.

So with another opening partnership, this time Tom Brend and Ben Perry the challenge started. Their opening bowlers, particularly their South African paceman down the hill, looked dangerous but scorable off. Tom Brend looked in fine form striking 16 off 19 balls before being caught at slip off a ball from their spinner that certainly bounced. Jack Ford looked in good hitting form as well until caught and bowled for 17 and Ben Perry had another LBW decision against him for 13. Note first that all out so far had scored double figures, and 2, if I were Ben Perry I would move Heaven and Earth to make sure the ball didn't hit my pad even if my foot was 5 feet outside leg stump. Paul Heard came in and after his usual safety period scored 18, Ollie Hannam had joined him and scored a sparkling 23 including 2 sixes and one 4 taking 10 off the last over to win the match. James Ford came in right at the end and probably could not believe his eyes at a long hop off their leggie that he smashed for 4 first ball. So there we were after 22 overs and just a little past 4 pm (great praise to the umpires for letting the game run a few minutes past 4 – and to Abbots captain for agreeing) we were home and dry, literally, with 20 points in the bag.

So with three wins out of the last 4 games there is reason for great cheer. There seems to be a great team spirit at the moment – success helps of course. We have beaten two of the sides that had to be considered relegation candidates – Ivybridge (saved this year by the Brixham fiasco) and Barton. At the start of the season I thought Abbots were candidates for promotion – and according to their scorer so did they, but we have now seen them off. Next Hatherleigh also at home, but they don't seem to be the all conquering team one might have expected from a former premier team, and after that we have Plympton away and Tavistock at home. Two wins will be needed from those matches.

So what of yesterday's game, fascinating cricket on a difficult but not impossible track, high quality bowling throughout and sensible batting – and even if a couple of wickets were out to shots that on reconsideration, that player might not have played another time – everyone contributed enough to bring home a complete victory. Even those not mentioned above contributed Cameron Atkinson took a low catch at mid on very well, and Ian Hayter a regular one at mid off – though I missed the ball before that.

As to man of the match, natural justice may perhaps point to Paul's fine bowling – but on this occasion I feel that Alex is the man. His batting earlier this season has regained much of his class – especially that sumptuous cover drive, but his bowling today started everything happening – and boy, did it happen after that.

The Quill