

DEVON LEAGUE A DIVISION

2018

Well here we are in may (are we really?) where, despite everything the weather has managed to chuck at us over the last few months, we are girding our loins for another season, and hopefully as exciting and successful as last year's. It must be admitted that it is disappointing that overseas player had to call off at the last minute, but there we are, every opportunity for local talent to show what they are made off.

Preliminary

Despite everything the combined talents of Martin Hockin Andy Davies John Luxton et al managed not only to get the ground ready for today but two decent wickets for our traditional friendly curtain raisers against against Barnstaple and Hatherleigh. My good friend the long suffering Bideford scorer tells me that with all changes to the Laws of Cricket and new scoring systems available, practice was needed by him as much as anybody. Bring back the pencil and score book I say.

However the first match against Barnstaple was an extraordinary affair. Bideford were put in and managed 178 with James Ford (how many seasons is that now, must be some king of Methuselah) scoring 39, Paul Heard 49 and Ollie Hannam 57. Heartening to see from 3 of our top batsmen. However after losing 3 quick wickets to Fred King and Jamie Lathwell, 2 Barumites got set in and with 5 overs and 7 wickets to go needed 7 to win. John Weeks brought on as a super sub as it were (he actually played the whole game - just trying to be trendy) bowled Jack Popham on 84 and he and Alex Hannam gave away 6 runs in the last 5 overs for a Bide win – quite remarkable.

Against Hatherleigh things weren't so easy Bideford, again batted first. This time J Ford Junior showed the early promise with 37, Paul Heard contributing 26 and Jamie Lathwell but it was Ollie Hannam with a very sensible knock of 91 who took the honours. We were never going to bowl Hatherleigh out and they duly won with overs to spare.

The message from these games were I think that scoring runs in this division is going to be far more difficult than last year and whilst the ball is difficult to get away, bat sensibly and make sure of the bonus points.

All the above was written on Friday night with anticipation rising like home made bread so at 12.30 tomorrow we're off.....

Happy days are here again
The skies above are clear again
So let's sing a song of cheer again
Happy days are here again...

Well, to an extent Happy days are here again. It was great to be back into the A division and even greater to win. However when the sing says that the skies were clear, they clearly didn't have the Ho! in mind. Shrouded by a mist or fret that started encroaching on the ground not long after the start until the players took on on a spectral appearance, and plagued by a scoring sytsem that stolidly refused to log on so that there was no live scoring there was in the score box a spectral gloom. Especially as 'what a march it was, Having seen Barnstaple bat themselves out of a

winning position 2 weeks (aided by good bowling) Plympton managed, more or less to do exactly the same so that the last few tense overs proved as exciting as anything I have seen - well since the last time we had an exciting finish,

Bideford were put in and batted first on pitch commendably prepared again by Martin H, but which made forceful play dangerous. Opening this year with James Ford and Tom Brend and they and indeed all the batsmen made some runs in contributing to the decent total of 211. James F made 29, Tom B 28, Olliw H 22, Paul H 18, Jamie L and Matt S 21, and a very important 28 from Alex Hannam (good to see him back in the runs) and Jack Ford 16 in a crucial last wicket stand of 40+. Extras contributed 20. This was a total that was defensible but everyone would have to be on top form.

After a splendid tea - I do wish I could lose weight - Paul Heard and Fred King opened. An opening stand of 33 made batting seem that the bowling could be tamed. Fred picked up one of the openers at 33, and there followed a second wicket stand of 90. After the quickies the spin [pairing of Martin Stewart 2- 37 off 10 and Jack Ford 2 - 20 off 10 (a combined 20 overs for 57) put the brakes on. Indeed at the drinks interval Plympton were some 20 runs ahead of the par score but they slowly slipped back until they needed 33 off the last 3 - but boy, they nearly got them. With the gloom increasing Paul H was clearly concerned about bringing back the opening bowlers - but we were still far ahead of the required rate had that happened. However Tom Brend in conjunction with James F bowled a further 5 overs before Paul brought himself and Fred back. Tom took 2 wickets including a very smart ct and b (my man of the match) before Fred took another and then bowled a last over which, despite some bug hitting restricted the visitors to 2 runs short of their target.

Last time we were in A it took 10 matches to get a win, this year success at the first outing.

Lets hope this is a harbinger of things to come.

Next week off to the seaside at Paignton, lets hope for more success – and that we (I) cab get the live scoring going

The Quill.