

Devon Cricket League A Division
Season 2019
Match No 5 v BARTON away

Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few. Sir Winston S. Churchill

Well perhaps that is a little bit dramatic, but with the Torbay air show taking place, and with a splendid view from the elevated score-box, the peerless spitfires and hurricanes, the slender red arrows and apocalyptic Typhoons screaming there way across the sky it was blazingly clear to everyone watching the fascinating game that the pitch needed a minesweeper rather than a Typhoon to take the honours.

As one of the umpires said from one end spin bowlers were bowling bouncers and from the other fast bowlers could hardly get the ball off the ground. However as my colleague scorer remarked they both have to play on the same wicket.

So looking at the wicket the question was, who would win the toss. Enter Captain Courageous who called correctly and promptly inserted Barton – a decision strongly disagreed with by those around me but one which I defended stoutly (well I couldn't do it thinly could I?)

At the start Alex Hannam bowled three pacey overs beating the bat on several occasions (if he could just get rid of the no balls?) supported by Steve Bond who did himself no harm at all with 2 wickets for 21 off 8. Alex was replaced by Jamie Lathwell who seems to grow in stature every match beating the bat on numerous occasions, unlucky to pick up only one but had the remarkable figures of 7-1-8-1.

Talking of remarkable figures, Jack Ford has turned in some pretty impressive ones this term and again claimed 2 wickets for 17 off 10. Paul Heard replaced Jamie and bowled the most hostile spell I have seen from him in many a long while ending with 2 for 18 off 10, with Jack Ford running out Barton's captain by deflecting the ball onto the backing up captain's stumps, there was not much time left for Martin Stewart or Cameron Atkinson to sell their wares – however Martin bowled 2 overs and got 1 for 4 and Cameron bowled 2 balls and one wicket – you really can't do more than that. Barton all out 91.

Barton having expired before the 3 o'clock deadline meant that Bideford had to immediately bat for either 15 overs or 4 o'clock before tea could be taken. I was speculating whether a break such as this is a greater hindrance to the batters or bowlers, and coming down marginally on the batters who, in a tight match had to sit on their nerves during the interval.

In the absence of Tom Brend, Ben Perry (on his birthday) opened with James Ford. The required run rate was under 2 an over so making absolutely certain that you kept your wicket was priority no. 1. All started well, until James received one from the left arm spinner opening the attack which kept low. James did not sprint back to the pavilion with joy. Ben was then joined by Jack Ford who played some nice shots in a partnership 40 with Ben Perry before he was also given out LBW. Clearly this was the time for Captain Courageous to take control. Paul strolled out and kept the ship on a steady keel, spanning the tea interval. Immediately after tea Ben was given out LBW and it was becoming clear that the bowler in question was not one to play back to - alas Ben Ollie H and James Hayter who looked at ease until then – all played back and were given out LBW.

Meanwhile the Captain, with a large lunge forward to the good balls and the occasional thump of the bad ones eked us nearer and nearer the total. When Alec H, the star batsman so far this term joined Paul, two beautiful cover drives for 4 (helped by 21 extras) left Bideford with 2 to win and as is appropriate, Paul thumped the ball to the boundary, to end on 25* - and clearly man of the match.

As I said about Ivybridge a fortnight ago, these games against Barton seem always to provide some talking points of interest. The one that came to mind here was that for all the ECB pushing teams to make more and more runs whether 150/50, 20/20 or 100 balls – which will presumably be downsized to 50 balls (quicker game old man, for the young you know, get them interested) – and probably soon just one ball bowled at an unguarded wicket, a very tight game on a difficult pitch with a minimal of opportunities for the batsman to clout the ball is more exciting than the star batsman hitting every ball for 6.

Well, having got that off my chest, well done Bideford, 2nd in the season but there are no easy games, everyone now is critical but importantly we know now how to win, how not to panic.

On to the next fray and who knows what?

The Quill