

Bideford Vs Bovey Tracey 2nd XI – B Division 14th May 2022

This Saturday just gone we welcomed Bovey 2nd XI to the Ho! Ahead of our second Devon league fixture of the season and our first league home game. Our line-up had just one change from the side that beat Totnes, in which Martin Stewart came into the side as an additional spin option. Bovey also won their opening fixture with relative ease – their team appeared considerably stronger than those of previous years and I knew we were in for a tough game.

The pitch looked a belter on first impression as it so often does at the Ho! – thank you Jamie, Andy and all involved. After a good warm up for all bar Clayton who cruelly had his Starbucks coffee smashed out of his hands (unsure of the culprit) it was time for the toss. Their captain guessed right, and they unsurprisingly decided to bat first.

Onto the game, we began with our usual pace duo of Alex Hannam and Steve Bond. Both bowled very well as per usual and were unlucky not to make the breakthrough on what was a very flat surface. Martin Stewart replaced Hannam and grabbed us the breakthrough with a shrewd caught and bowled chance. Bond finished with 9 overs for 31 – an impressive display from the Victoria Park paceman. Having got to drinks with Bovey about 110-1 we knew if we kept on track with more good bowling and solid fielding we could restrict Bovey to an under par total. After drinks, the now settled partnership began to push on and start to find the boundary with more regularity. Clayton took over from Bondy and whilst getting hit about a bit – he crucially unlocked the remaining openers defences, who hauled out to Roey on the long on boundary. Roey took over Martin and bowled well for his 9 overs, again crucially removing their number 3 on 95 – with still 10 overs left if Roey had not have taken his off stump out the ground we could have been chasing far more. With their total now past 200 and plenty left to bat, it would be hard for us to restrict a big score. With changes needed it then came to the choice of the 6th bowler, I felt our best option was James Hayter. Its never easy being handed the ball with a few overs to go and being asked to close the innings, let alone in a batting friendly game where 2 experienced batsmen are trying to hit every single ball of yours out of the park, but as always JJ didn't shy away and took the ball willingly – another string to his ever-increasing bow. Alongside Alex, James saw out our bowling innings taking a wicket each – the 2 middle order bats were (putting it nicely) agricultural in their approach but very effective – taking their total to 284 off 45 overs. Special mention to O Hannam behind the stumps with another fantastic display and a smart stumping showing us all why he was voted Best Newcomer at his Bournemouth Cricket Awards night in the week. His keeping has come on leaps and bounds, his chat hasn't.

Now normally having conceded so many off your 45 overs you're quite deflated and the team talk is a bit damp. However, we felt quite the opposite – such was the quality of the pitch and the rapid outfield, we felt Bovey had probably finished still 30 or 40 light of what would make things extremely tough. We knew with our strength in depth if we batted positively with measured aggression, we'd always be there or thereabouts. The wise (and somewhat sore this morning) head of James Ford said to me at the interval 'this will be a good game' – he was right and then some.

James Hayter and I opened again – thanks to Kevin and Andy for redoing the lines at the interval. I again struggled to find my pre-season form and was adjudged LBW for 4 – frustrating to say the least. In previous years, particularly last year – losing myself or James H early almost always spelt trouble, this year quite the opposite. Much the same as the previous week at Totnes James, joined by Oliver Hannam set about a demolition job amassing 180 between them in the next 28 overs. Both lads looked completely unfazed and fully in control of the gameplan. James H brought up back-to-back B division centuries in another ruthless display. Having just turned 18 I'm already running out of

words to describe the talent this lad has – special player. It will be a century fondly remembered by younger brother Julian, who in standing to applaud his older brother, suffered cramp and collapsed like a yesteryear Bideford batting line-up. Oliver at the other end produced another fabulous knock of 86 off 100 balls – another young lad with special ability, I think this will be a big season for him, now just to convert to three figures – jugs aren't that expensive. With both settled batsmen now gone, I knew it would be a very tough finish – psychologically we normally always falter in these situations. Clayton and Fordy battled well to keep up with the rate making 13 and 16 respectively, Roey was bowled which brought together Julian Hayter and Alex Hannam. When Alex went in at 261-6 there were about 4 overs left and we need 24. It may not have seemed it but I'm sure I speak for a few senior Bideford members watching on – I was a bag of nerves. But having spent most of my cricketing life playing with Alex and knowing just how good he can be with bat in his hand, I really shouldn't have been nervous. With Julian keeping a professional head and working singles it came down to the 43rd over. Alex launched the 3rd ball over midwicket for a huge six, followed by a 2 and another lovely shot for 4 – this was not the slogging we'd seen from Bovey but controlled brutality. With us virtually over the line needing 1 to win, not content with finding a single, Alex deposited the 6th ball of the over straight down the ground for 6. Absolute elation. Incredible scenes and a game I won't forget for a long time. Hats off to everyone at the ground who were supporting including the 2s who won so easily they were done and back before the finish of our game. 17 points for Bideford and another massive win against a good side.

What a win, leading such a special group of lads in these circumstances is always an honour. Special mentions to James and the Hannam duo who enabled the win. We are already showing this season that when it matters players are stepping up which makes my job infinitely easier, I must apologise for my lack of contribution but I promise it will come. We are notoriously poor at chasing, so to chase nearly 300 with an over to spare shows just how good this team truly is, and I hark back to my preseason talk – nothing is unachievable with such talent. Second in the table 2 from 2, Ivybridge at home next week – we go again!

Cheers,

Brendy x

Scorecard: <https://blwh.play-cricket.com/website/results/5113138>