

Devon Cricket League A Division
Season 2019
Match No.3 v Ivybridge – home

Curiouser and curiouser from *Alive in Wonderland* – Lewis Carroll.

Why is it, and this you understand is rhetorical question, are so many matches against Ivybridge curious? I have seen – at a guess 20 or more and very few have followed a predictable path. One side always seems to perform the unexpected.

Yesterday's encounter at an overcast Ho! Was no exception. It seemed from arrival that toss may well be the key to the whole thing. The past fortnights weather from torrential downpours to blistering sun certainly seemed to have an effect on a pitch that had lateral and height movement. So of course, Bideford lost the toss and were put in to bat.

After the last two defeats against the arguably the two strongest teams in the division this was an absolutely crucial game and after an awful start Bideford, with very few shots in anger found themselves 51-6. It is true Tom Brend had a bruise nearer his hip than knee from ball he was out to – but these things happen. In the scheme of things these matters are usually balanced out and a couple of Ivybridge decisions later on ensured this was the case. So after the dreadful start and by the time the computers had barely warmed up it seemed the game was over. Newcomer James Hayter found himself at the wicket with James Lathwell to start fightback – and that is just what they did. James H was meticulous in his defence and help up an end to let first Jamie L and then Alex Hannam scored – what proved to be the winning runs. James and Jamie (there are getting too many James in this team, and elderly scorer might well get muddled) put on 46 priceless runs Jamie L hitting 2 sixes and a four. Just when hope was beginning to rise Jamie cut a soft catch to cover and departed for 26. James H was joined by Alex Hannam. We all now Alex can bat well – indeed some of the cover driving he has produced over the years are as good as any I've seen in the Leagues over the years in any division, but of recent year something has been lacking, whether concentration, lack of confidence I don't know.

However he immediately showed that he was not going to get out in a silly manner and stoically defended all but the hittable balls. James H unfortunately departed when Alex arrived and at 112 for 9 with one wicket left Martin Stewart arrived to try to form a march winning partnership. The last stand put on 45, Alex scored 34 of them to end on 41 not out, whilst Martin supported him well and was run out in the last over for 9. A generous bout of extras (29 – second highest score) Gave Bideford 157 all out – what an improvement on the 51 – 6

A superb tea – I think Jenny Ford she was feeding the 5000 – was filled with the question was it enough. Well at least it was something to bowl at, was the favoured reply. Well against Ivybridge you can never tell.

The Ivybridge openers, one tall late 20s left handed the other short teenager right handed. The left handed one (called Huxtable!) proceeded to put the opening bowlers to the sword with 37 Off 31 balls in a partnership of 56. He was ct by Alex off Jamie L with a ball with a catch that seemed to hit the top of his bat when it was touching the ground and motionless – very curious. So 56-1 played 56-6. There could be no doubt that another defeat was shortly on its way. But, to assume that would be to forget the hand of chance that overs over all cricket matches. Jack Ford took over from Paul heard at the sea end,

Jamie L having taken over from Alex H at the road end. The batsman 3, their overseas player checked with the scorers the exact total Ivybridge needed and the number of overs left faced 7 balls scored 3 runs and promptly ran himself out going for a very risky 2nd run when there was need and was beaten by a find throw from Jack F taken superbly by Ollie H. I could feel that old Bideford v Ivybridge curiosity rising to the surface. The young opening batsman kept one end going (he was eventually the 8th out with the second highest score of 27). And, then something totally remarkable happened. Jamie L took three wickets in his last over, 2 caught by Ollie one by Ben Perry in the slips. 66-2 became 66-5. A short with a seventh wicket stand of 33 but when the 8th wicket went down 107 – to Paul H, the 9th at 114 it seemed clear that again a most curious match had lived up to expectations and when Tom Brend took the final catch at mid off there we were victory by 39 runs and 18 precious points.

Looking around the Leagues, the scores yesterday were very low – and in fact 157 was a decent enough total. Well there we are. The sort of cricket match which should have had the crowds on their feet – and had there been a crowd I am sure they would have been. People speak with awe about the exploits of the world famous players hitting 100s in record time, but for an enthralling match played in a good spirit one would have to go a long way to see better.

I don't have to go a long way next week, a short hop over the Blackdown hills for Budleigh away. This is another key match. The league is beginning to shape up to what was expected 3 or 4 teams fighting promotion the others to retain their place.

So a wonderful day – on the trip back some of the roads were flooded so for once the weather gods were on our side.

Man of the match without doubt was Jamie Lathwell his 4-24 key, but we must not forget other bowlers who contributed. Jack Ford an amazing 19 overs for 5 runs and seven maidens Paul H with 2 for 34, Martin Stewart 2-7 of 4 and Ben Perry for for1. All these deserve honourable mention in despatches.

In short a thoroughly fascinating, and vitally important game.=, which hopefully will now kick-start our season.

The Quill.