

Saturday 2nd VI captains report

GAME 1:- v Poole (A)

What a surprise after all of the rain we had recently, this game was cancelled!

GAME 2:- v Colehill (H)

Colehill won the toss and elected to bat first - this decision was looking justified as they reached 36-0, however, with the introduction of the slower bowlers - Steve Kent and Sam Marks (in particular, whose figures were 8-4-5-4) Colehill were reduced to 55-6. The pressure was maintained by Max Nicholson & Ethan Stacey - who, also, both claimed wickets as Colehill were dismissed for just 86. The team cruised to a 6-wicket win with runs for both Matt. Beard & John Lewis - who I am hopeful will both have 'big' seasons for the team.

GAME 3:- v Blandford (A)

We recovered from the loss of an early wicket with a half-century partnership between Sam Wells & Tom Rutherford to reach 65-1. However, when Tom was dismissed for 37, this led to the innings faltering with the loss 4 wickets - including myself for 25 to leave us 109-5. The innings was rescued by a half-century stand between Matt Beard (32) and Phil Eades (25) enabling us to reach 163-7 - which at least gave us something to bowl at against a strong team. Blandford's Top-5 are very powerful - which I remembered from last year! Blandford appeared to be cruising at 108-2, but some brilliant bowling by Matt. (B), Ethan Stacey & Max Nicholson helped reduce them to 125-5. But, despite some great fielding and bowling - Matt, ended up with 3 wickets and Ethan & Max both claiming a brace, Blandford reached their target for the loss of 8 wickets with 2 overs to spare.

GAME 4:- v Weymouth (A)

I always thought this was going to be a tough game against the unbeaten league-leaders - especially, as we were a little 'light' with regards to availability! We were soon under pressure against some very good seam bowling and were reduced to 40-4. Despite some resistance from Jon Gregory (21) and Phil Eades (32) - we were dismissed for just 118. In reply and in spite of a brilliant spell of swing bowling by Lily Wood, Weymouth had few alarms in reaching their target to claim a convincing 7-wicket victory.

GAME 5:- v Martinstown (H)

I won the toss and elected to bat on a hot, sunny day at Days Park - I wasn't sure how often I was going to say that this year! We got off to a great start with a half-century partnership between John Lewis & Sam Wells. However, when Sam & I fell in quick succession it was left to John & Matt. Dunster to rebuild with another half-century stand, but just like earlier, Matt. for (29) & John for a quite sublime 70 - which included 11 boundaries were dismissed in consecutive overs to leave the innings in the balance at 158-5 with 10 overs remaining. Although fear not, the in-form Matt. Beard and extremely versatile - Jon Gregory produced an 81 stand at nearly 9-runs an over. With Jon making 36 and Matt remaining undefeated on 61 - which included hitting the last ball of the innings to the boundary (his 12th) to enable us to post a slightly above average score of 243-7 from our 40 overs. Again just like against Blandford & Weymouth - I knew their Top-5 would be strong! Due to an excellent opening spell by Ethan Stacey, Martinstown were behind the required run-rate but were still in the game due to keeping wickets in-hand. The game continued to be a very even contest between bat and ball with our 'change' bowlers of Sam Wells & Max Nicholson excelling and, although, wickets were still at a premium. With 9 overs to go, Martinstown needed nearly 10 runs

an-over, but, still had their 2 'gun' batsmen at the crease. A game which perhaps naively I thought we were always in control of (just), took one final 'twist' in our favour, when Phil Eades produced 2 brilliant stumpings to dismiss both batsmen in consecutive overs off Max. Despite this, Martinstown still had a chance if they hit the last ball for 6. Luckily, Sam Wells bowled it beautifully (again) and they could only manage a single! A truly great game of cricket.

GAME 6:- v Cheselbourne (A)

We received a walkover as, unfortunately, they could not get a team...

GAME 7:- v Christchurch (A)

The team continued their quest for promotion - on a wicket, which if I am honest, was not sure how long it was going to last due to the lack of available preparation time due to the recent inclement weather (again), although, they were very desperate to play! I lost a crucial toss - which, obviously, meant we would be batting last!

Despite some excellent bowling by both Matt. Beard & Sam Marks - their South African opener had a 'day-out' smashing 75 at a strike rate of over 200! However, the game changed with the introduction of 'star' all-rounder Max Nicholson - as the hosts 'slipped' from 103-1 to 109-4. In spite of this setback, the hosts middle-order rallied and at 150-5 looked set for a big total. Until, the game changed (again) with the introduction of Swan's spin 'twins' Sid Nash & Ethan Stacey - who between them bowled their 15 overs - conceding just 49 runs and claiming 4 wickets. Sid, finished with 3-25 as the hosts were dismissed for 211.

In reply, we got off to the best possible start reaching 88-0, with Sam Wells making 30 and Mark Stacey batting beautifully before being unluckily dismissed for 62. Although, the hosts introduced their slower bowlers and suddenly we had been reduced to 159-5. The innings was rescued by Craig Wells & Matt. Beard, but, when they were both spectacularly caught out in quick succession - we were left in the precarious position of 183-8 and, although, the tailenders battled valiantly against the turning ball - we were finally dismissed just 10 runs short! At least, we had the consolation of picking up the 3 bonus losing points to take 13 from the narrow defeat.

GAME 8:- v Marnhull (H)

This was a game where I knew last week's disappointment needed to be 'put to bed' straight away, so, I was determined to bat them out of the game! Mark Stacey & Sam Wells got us off to another good start - reaching 40-0, however, we failed to build on this and were faltering at 90-4. But, the innings was rescued by an 80-run partnership between Ethan Stacey and myself at a run-a-ball. Until, I was brilliantly caught on the boundary for 61 - this led to 3 quick wickets falling for just 15 runs including Ethan for 29. But, from 186-7, the lower-order of Phil Eades, Tony Fowle & Harry Long batted brilliantly - taking 42 runs off the last 4 overs to give the score a more respectable look at 227-8.

However, despite the best efforts of Ethan & myself the visitors got off to a brilliant start in reply - reaching 143-1 in the 28th over and well on course to chase the target down. The game changed when I introduced - Ross Carroll & Tony as they bowled the remaining 12 overs (taking 6 wickets and conceding just 61 runs in the process). This victory was not quite as comfortable as I would have liked, but, certainly showed what tremendous strength-in-depth that we have...

GAME 9:- v Cheselbourne (H)

This was another game where I won the toss and wanted to bat the opposition out of the game - as I felt this was not only our main strength, but also, our best way of getting the 20 points which we needed to keep-up with the Top-2!

John Lewis & myself got us off to a very positive start - putting on 60 for the first wicket in just 11 overs. But, the team failed to build on this (again) and when Matt. Beard and myself were out in quick succession we were reeling at 128-6. However, the innings was rescued by a 70-run partnership in just 9 overs between Phil Eades & Max Nicholson. Phil scored 39 - which included 8 boundaries and when he was dismissed, Max was joined by Tony Fowle - they combined for a half-century stand, until, Max got out attempting his 9th boundary for 51. Tony remained unbeaten on 35 as we posted a formidable total of 257-8 from 40 overs.

Cheselbourne were soon in trouble against some excellent seam/swing bowling from Matt. Beard & Sam Marks - they were well supported by Ed. Cross & Ross Carroll and despite some 'lusty' blows by the visitors lower-order - we completed a convincing 50-run victory. This put us in a confident/positive frame-of-mind for the visit of the unbeaten league-leaders - Blandford next week.

GAME 10:- v Blandford (H)

I lost (another) crucial toss and we were asked to bat in overcast conditions. After the loss of 2 early wickets, the innings was rescued by a 66-run partnership between Simon Goldsack & myself in just 13 overs. However, when I was dismissed for 48 another wicket fell quickly and, suddenly, we were 113-4! Although, the momentum was regained by Simon & Matt. Beard who put on 42 before Simon was brilliantly caught for a sublime 60. It was left to Matt. - who remained undefeated on 49 and Jon Gregory (the most selfless cricketer you could ever wish to meet) to get Swanage to a respectable score of 211-7.

Despite the best efforts of Lily Wood & myself, the visitors got off to an excellent start in reply reaching 106-2 in the 25th over. At this point, having recently introduced Matt. Beard & James Harding into the attack, I thought it was time for 'Golden-Arm' - Simon Goldsack to enter the fray (he bowled superbly, taking a brace of wickets and putting the visitors on the back foot. The pressure intensified still further when I came back on and bowled their 'star' all-rounder - who normally hits me out of the attack! And, although, the visiting Captain remained at the crease, we succeeded in keeping him off strike to create enough pressure on his partners and just managed to get 'over-the-line' - securing a vital 9-run win.

GAME 11:- v Colehill (A)

This was potentially the pivotal game of the whole season and having arrived at the ground at about 12:15 - John Lewis had been there since 11:30, it was apparent that it was going to be very difficult to get much cricket and I even remember saying to their Captain "I really don't want a game of this magnitude to potentially be resolved by the coin-flip"!

Having waited until nearly 3:00 and against my better judgement, it was agreed that the game should go ahead - they were, obviously, desperate to play as they not only wanted to get their revenge for the game at Swanage earlier in the season, but also, go further clear of us in the quest for securing the second promotion place.

Unfortunately, I lost (another) vital toss and the hosts exploited the conditions brilliantly with some very hostile, seam bowling and bowled us out for just 84. As both the conditions/pitch improved, the hosts had few alarms in reaching our meagre total - losing only 3 wickets.

I could not help but think that this game and the one at Weymouth earlier in the season (we only took 4 points from a possible 40) would come back and 'haunt' us at the end of the season. All the team could do was keep winning our matches and see where we end-up!

GAME 12:- v Hamworthy (A)

Unfortunately, this game was cancelled after an hour due to the inclement weather...

GAME 13:- v Weymouth (H)

Weymouth won the toss and elected to bat on a very rare, hot day! The visitors were soon under pressure due to some fine seam bowling by both Freddie Long and myself - I took 3-32. The pressure on the visitors was maintained by Swan's 'spin-twins' Sid Nash & Pete Richards - together they took 5 wickets for just 60 runs from their 16 overs to help reduce the visitors to 141-7. However, the visitor's lower-order batted very enterprisingly and managed to reach the respectable score of 201 from their 40 overs.

In reply, the team got off to great start with John Lewis & Simon Goldsack sharing 82 runs for the first wicket. However, when they both fell in quick succession for 49 and 29 respectively - there was a need for a period of consolidation - this came from a 55-run partnership between Pete Richards & Freddie Long. Pete batted beautifully - hitting 10 boundaries in his innings of 49, while Freddie batted very sensibly for his 31, but all of a sudden, we went from 150-2 to 183-6. Luckily, for the team - Phil Eades & myself were still there to guide us to an exceptional 4 wicket win with 3 overs to spare.

GAME 14:- v Poole (A)

Poole won the toss and much to my surprise asked us to bat first - maybe they were concerned about their batting frailties?

John Lewis & Simon Goldsack continued their rich-vein of form with their 3rd half-century opening partnership in-a-row (77). When John was dismissed for 29, Jon Gregory maintained the momentum with an enterprising knock of 38 - which included some powerful cut shots and exquisite cover drives. When Simon was, finally, dismissed for 70 - attempting his 13th boundary, there was a very useful cameo innings from Jack Thompson and along with an excellent run-a-ball 30 from all-rounder Steve Ramsay, we were able to reach a formidable total of 244-9 from our 40 overs.

In reply, the hosts were soon under pressure against some exceptional swing and seam bowling by Steve & myself - who took 3 and 2 wickets respectively to leave the hosts reeling at

55-5. Despite some powerful hitting by the hosts lower-order - they could not deal with Mike Gould's incredible spell of leg-spin bowling - he took 4 wickets, to restrict Poole to just 155 to help complete a comprehensive victory.

GAME 15:- v Marnhull (A)

We continued our quest for promotion with the long trip to Marnhull. Stand-in Captain - John Lewis won a crucial toss and elected to field - this decision was more than vindicated when his inspired choice of opening the bowling with off-spin sensation - Pete Richards (who took 2 wickets in his first over). The pressure was maintained on the hosts by Reuben Cave & Alex Wood, however, the

introduction of Swan's other spin bowlers - Simon Goldsack & Mike Gould (who both took a brace of wickets) to help reduce the hosts from 62-2 at one stage to 86-7. Pete, then, returned to bamboozle the hosts lower-order and restrict them to just 107 - finishing with 4 wickets.

In reply, Simon & John Lewis - made it a hat-trick of opening stands (58), but, when John for 30 & Simon for 20 were dismissed in consecutive overs, it was left to Harry Long & Pete to guide the team to another convincing win by 8 wickets.

GAME 16:- v Christchurch (H)

The visitors won the toss and elected to bat first on not only a sunny day at Days Park, but also, a beautiful batting wicket. Swan's opening bowlers - Matt. Beard & Max Nicholson both bowled brilliantly. They were ably supported by Harry Long & Sam Wells - together they helped reduce the visitors to 121-6.

The visitors lower- order batted superbly and it took a brilliant catch from myself to break-up the visitors 7th wicket partnership of 70 (191-7). Pete Richards, then, returned and took the remaining 3 wickets in the 37th over to dismiss the visitors to a below-par 194. In reply, for the fourth week-in-a-row Simon Goldsack & John Lewis got the team off to an incredible start - they put on 130 runs in just 18 overs. They both played some ferocious cut shots and expansive cover drives. John fell first for a sparkling 48, he was closely followed by Simon - who made a dazzling 61. Despite the loss of another quick wicket (140-3), the team cruised to another victory by 7 wickets thanks to Tom Rutherford 29 not out & Harry Long 27 not out. This left the team 8 points behind Colehill with 2 games remaining.

GAME 17:- v Hamworthy (H)

Our game with Hamworthy was rained off, however, our main rival for promotion - Colehill, managed to play and despite the fact that they lost. They still gained 3 more points than us - which made our task in the last game even more difficult.

GAME 18:- v Martinstown (A)

After winning the toss and electing to bat, I was very surprised to see the team slump to 44-4. The innings was rescued by an 82-run partnership between Tom Rutherford & Matt. Beard. When Tom was spectacularly caught for a run-a-ball 66 and Matt. followed 15 runs later for 35 the team were in the precarious position of 140-6. However, an unbroken half-century stand between Jon Gregory & Phil Eades enabled the team to post a respectable score of 209-7 from our 40 overs.

The hosts response was emphatic particularly from their ex-Dorset star - Ed Nicholls (who hit an exceptional run-a-ball 77). But, when he was dismissed by an amazing catch by Simon Goldsack off the bowling of Andrew Hancock - this left the game in the balance with the hosts on 147-5. Although, despite the best efforts of Harry Long & myself, the hosts reached their target off the penultimate ball.

In the final league table, the team finished 4th winning 10 of our 15 matches, the leading batsmen were:- John Lewis - 300 runs at an average of 29 (who won Batsman Of The Year), Simon Goldsack - 260 runs at 35 & myself - who scored 240 runs at 27. With regards to the bowling, it was a 3-way tie at the top between Matt. Beard (who won both the Bowler and Fielder Of The Year Awards), Max Nicholson & Pete Richards - who all claimed 13 wickets. As well as that, Phi Eades finished the season with the most wicket-keeping dismissals in the Division.

On a personal note, I would just like to take this opportunity to thank all of the players for their commitment and support during the season and, also, a special thanks to both Tatty King & Chris Wood for all of their help with both umpiring & scoring respectively - it really is much appreciated. I am extremely hopeful/positive that with this perfect 'blend' of experience & youth the team can make it out of this Division next season...

Kind regards,

Mike Nash