

Week 19 (Bank Holiday special)

It's rinse and repeat at the top of the SCCL Premier Division as Quatt and Whitchurch both managed a 44 point weekend, this time both sides endured a nervy afternoon in near identical matches.

At the **Quatt** Oval, the hosts were in early trouble against **Allscott Heath** at 14-3, but thanks to some good contributions lower down the order, were able to get a total of 150 in the bank. Scott Furber top scored with 34 while Luke Daley at number 10 struck a bright 26 late on. For the visitors, Jason Summers made it a dream weekend personally with 5-58, while the outstanding Kuldeep Devatwal took 3-14 from his 15 overs. Summers opened up for the Heath and scored 20, but it was clear that Devatwal would be key to any successful run chase. He was joined by Callum Starling at 32-4 and the two combined well to add 65. But when Devatwal was caught by Ryan Wheldon off Furber for 54, the momentum shifted dramatically as the hosts turned the screw. Furber completed an outstanding match taking 4-10, while Kuldeep Diwan also took 4-39 as Quatt wrapped up a 33 run victory. Credit to Allscott who have had a strong weekend that augurs well for them for the last 3 weeks.

43 miles north at **Oswestry**, the visitors **Whitchurch** gave their travelling army of supporters plenty of early cheer with a fine 68 opening partnership between Muhammed Fahim (28) and Iftikhar Khan (44) promoted to open for the absent Mas Hasnain. However that was as good as it got with the bat as the rest of the line up failed to press on in the face of some excellent slow bowling from Matthew Davies (3-10) and Shak Marshall (3-31). A total of 150 looked fairly competitive but with Saturdays top scorer Henry Walker departing 2nd ball to Dan Bowen the home reply was off to a disastrous start. It could have been worse if Josh Darley hadn't been shelled at slip next delivery and with Darley and Matty Richards putting on 40, the hosts were back in the game. The introduction of Shafiq Ahmed and Shabbir Khan changed the nature of the contest however as they split 7 wickets, the leggie Khan taking 4-28 and office Shafiq 3-41, as Whitchurch turned the screw and ended the hosts resistance at 122ao.

Sentinel have threatened to get involved in a relegation scrap at various stages of the season but they are definitely safe now after a fine win against **Ludlow**. Some solid contributions all down the order from Tom Griffiths (35), Malcolm Serplet (25), Connor Cheshire (31), Lloyd Edwards (48) and 30 from Niall Salisbury (who has decided to try his hand in Division 4 next season as captain of Condover), lifted the total to 215-9, with Luke Miles and Jason Oakes each taking a trio of wickets. For large parts of the run chase it appeared Jason Oakes was guiding his team to victory but when he departed for a magnificent 103, there were still 40 required. Oliver Wilson was then brought back on and he added to his growing reputation by quickly wrapping the game up taking 4-40 as Ludlow fell 11 short.

Shrewsbury 2nds and **St Georges** faced off at London Rd in a huge game for both sides. Batting first the hosts played positively as usual with scores from Dan Walker (30), Ed Prideaux (41) and Thomas Richards (51) as they reached 206ao off the penultimate ball. Ben Byram with a seasons best 5-49 was the pick of the Dragons attack, while there were a couple of wickets for Saturdays hero Faisal Khan. The Dragons reply was all about near namesake Faizan Khan, as the former Cannock pro shoved up the order to Number 3, once again delivered an outstanding innings and in making 96 eschewed personal glory for seeing his side to a losing draw as they ended on 180-9. A 14-9 points return that could have been 24-6 if Shrewsbury had taken the final wicket, how crucial could that be in 3 weeks time?

With other teams around them picking up wins recently it was imperative that **Frankton** stopped the rot on their trip to **Shelton**, but sadly it was not to be as they were on the receiving end of a heavy defeat from a side who were themselves on the rebound from a surprise Saturday loss at Oswestry. Frankton opened up brightly enough with George Dickin striking a quick 25, but from 48-1, the visitors lost an astonishing 7 wickets for just 4 runs. Simon Jones who is enjoying a fantastic season took 5 of them while Darren Moody, deputising for Sam Griffiths also impressed with 3-32. Jones is now the leading seam bowler in the division with 40 wickets, and surely a shoe-in for the Team of the Year, as he ended with 5-38. Frankton did eventually reach 115ao, thanks to an excellent 49no from number 9 Jamie Birch. The hosts lost 3 wickets in the chase but Antonio Morris with 42no saw them home with 40 overs left in the game.

Madeley have endured a torrid weekend as they succumbed to a heavy defeat to a **Wem** side who are producing some real “Feast or Famine” performances of late. It was a fine day for Harry Chandler as he equalled his career best score in making 102, and while there was another middle order collapse as they lost 7 wickets for 36 as Mithun took 5-67, an even half century from Tom Astley helped Wem add 104 for the 8th wicket and an eventual score of 230. Astley then showed his quality with the ball as he ripped through the home line up taking 5-24, with elder brother Jim chipping in with a brace as Madeley were 58ao a result that leaves them just 21 points above the bottom 3, but still fairly safe in 7th place.

So onto Saturday and the biggest match in the SCCL for 6 years with all roads leading north as Whitchurch face Quatt. With both teams expected to be at full strength, it's really an impossible one to call. Quatt have looked nervy in recent weeks while Whitchurch rely heavily on the runs of Maz Hasnain.