

Whitchurch see off rivals Wem, one win away from surprise title..

By Jamie Dowley

Whitchurch passed their final big test as they overcame local rivals **Wem** in a solid display at Heath Rd which means they travel to bottom side Frankton next week knowing a win will secure them a first title in 7 years. After a disastrous start losing their first 2 matches, both at home, which resulted in a change of captaincy, Dan Bowen now has a remarkable 17 wins from 19 games in charge and the latest of these was built off the back of another fine innings from Maz Hasnain who struck a sublime 94. He received excellent support from Elliot Bowen (47), while a late cameo from Shaf Ahmed saw the hosts reach 222-7. For Wem, Tom Astley once again led the attack with 3-37, while brother Harry bowled a fine spell and was unlucky to go wicketless. Harry also top scored with the bat with 34 as although Wem had moments where they looked likely to get into the run chase, it somewhat petered out losing their last 6 wickets for 31 runs to give Whitchurch a comfortable 85 run win. Shabbir Khan wrapping things up with 4-13 as the home patrons, out in good number again, gave Bowens men rapturous applause as they left the field.

For long time leaders **Quatt** it seems the game is nearly up, but they delivered an outstanding performance with the bat against a **Sentinel** side who are really struggling to keep the runs down with the white ball. Alex Biddle promoted to open showed what a fine all round cricketer he is with a stunning 134 off just 102 balls, while the consistent Tom Whitney chipped in with a quick 51 as the visitors to Albert Rd totalled 334 in a rain affected 47 overs. Jacob Binnersley and Tom Griffiths who always contribute with either bat or ball shared 6 wickets but all the economy rates took a pounding for the Engines. As per recent weeks however the Sentinel reply was not without spirit and the tactic of promoting Jonathan Evans to number 3 paid off spectacularly as he struck a career best 97, such a shame the former Acton Reynald player couldn't reach three figures. Ed Ashlin also cracked on with 35 and Oliver Wilson showed a rare glimpse of his undoubted batting talent with 33 as Sentinel closed out on 249-6 to give Quatt a 36 run win.

Allscott chairman Jason Allen promised his side would be celebrating long into the evening as they have guaranteed finishing no lower than that pivotal 8th place after a huge win in every sense against **Oswestry**, for whom their own premier position is now hanging by the thinnest of threads . With Jason Summers and Jack Case putting on 71 for the first wicket, the stage was set for another Kuldeep Devatwal masterclass, with the overseas pro showing why he is rumoured to be a target of other clubs as he stroked a majestic 115. Devatwal now approaching 1200 league runs did have a stroke of luck on 40, caught off a no ball, but otherwise was in imperious form, receiving good support from Carl Starling (26), Max Ferrington (28) and Richard Addison (25no). The visitors without star bat Josh Darley huffed and puffed but were blown down by Callum Starling (5-33), with that man Summers (is he the best non overseas allrounder in the league?) taking 4-17. Club Spokesman Tom Marsh was equally delighted after the game "as a club we can't believe we have got so many points and wins, the overseas Kully has been very special, but the likes of Callum and Summers have also been outstanding when it really matters"

Madeley can also look forward to the prospect of Premier Division cricket in 2025 as they comfortably overcame **Frankton** by 126 runs. Solid contributions all down the home order from Andy Laycock (36), Salim Ahmed (43), Mithun (27), Oli Davis (32) and Nadeem Ahmed (36) resulted in a score of 251-7, which was enough for the visitors who were missing key man Jordan Parry, (the allrounder no doubt watching his beloved Wrexham narrowly overcome Shrewsbury in their biggest game for years.). Captain Tom Welti with 33 and Tom Wilkie with 27 did their best but with Martin Boyle again in the wickets with 3-36 it was left to Shahzaib Shahzaib to clean the innings up with 3-4 as the visitors stay in the Premier Division draws to a close.

Ludlow opens Luke Miles and Jason Oakes shared the biggest partnership in the SCCL this year as they put on 229 for the opening wicket against **Shrewsbury 2nds**, Miles passing the 700 run mark for the year with 113 while Oakes did likewise in cashing in with a seasons best 129. Will Sparrow hit a rapid 34 on what may prove to be his last appearance, as the Burway men amassed 326-5. George Hughes, Rob Foster and Theo Truss all passed 40 in the reply as they mustered a respectable 213 all out, Oakes also performing with the ball taking 4-16. The county towners can finish no higher than 9th and their fate may rest in the hands of our champion clubs success or failure in those end of season play offs...

It's a similar story for **St Georges**, whose status for 2025 is also outside their control now, as they fell to a 3 wicket defeat to a **Shelton** side who will be pleased to get a win under their belt after indifferent recent form. The Dragons were staring down the barrell at 33-4, Sam Griffiths with 3 early wickets including star man Faizan Khan out for 6, but Sam Morgan (33) and Azaad Rafiq (38no) led a recovery charge of 59 for the 6th wicket. Another collapse followed though as the hosts were shot out for 117, Griffiths ending with 5-31. For once the Shelton reply was a patient affair with young Freddie Salisbury digging in for 33, and they eventually got over the line in the 38th over, a result that just about keeps them on course for 4th place, comfortably their highest ever placing in Shropshire League cricket.

Into Division One and **Newtown** have opened up a significant lead at the top with 3 games to go after they beat Wellington 2nds, and both **Bomere** and **Cound** were defeated to Wroxeter and Chirk respectively. The Welsh side look set to make a return to the Premier Division where they could well be a competitive outfit in 2025. Counds loss to Chirk was an absolute thriller with Connor Glendenning producing a batting masterclass with 141 that got Cound within 1 run of victory, and they will be hoping to get over the line next week in a huge game versus Bomere with that potential 2nd promotion spot up for grabs.

And so to the final day of the Premier Division season, where Whitchurch travel across to Frankton hoping to win the title, Quatt can only hope and pray that their rivals come unstuck as they host Madeley. Elsewhere it's a bun fight at the bottom with St Georges, Oswestry and Shrewsbury all desperate for a win that could take them to 9th place and a much better chance of survival.