

Week 20 Premier Division Review

By Jamie Dowley

## **Whitchurch hit the top after edging Quatt thriller ..Fahim delights crowd with breathtaking century**

We have new leaders in the Premier Division as the game of the day fully lived up to its pre match hype, with **Whitchurch** shading **Quatt** by 23 runs in an enthralling contest in front of a big crowd at Heath Road. Batting first the hosts were dealt an early blow with talisman Maz Hasnain holing out for 14, but his fellow opener Muhammad Fahim knuckled down to play what his captain Dan Bowen described post match as the “innings of the season”. His 111 off 133 balls containing 15 boundaries really was an exquisite knock, with the patrons giving him a standing ovation as he left the field, and was the glue that held the innings together as only Shaf Ahmed with a late 25no made any notable contribution as Whitchurch totalled 210-8. This against a Quatt attack that was led by Gareth Jones who bowled superbly for 2-19 off his 10, while Alex Biddle took 6-53, a career best haul for a cricketer who rarely fails to make an impact.

At tea the general feeling was that 210 was only a par score on a wicket that was an absolute belter, but when the raw pace of Alex Heath shot through Olly Plank for 0 in the first over, and he followed it up doing the same to brother Dan soon after, Quatt were on the back foot. Tom Whitney (28)and Ryan Wheldon (44) rebuilt the innings, and even when the former fell for 28, Scott Furber joined Wheldon for a 50 partnership. With 10 overs to go Quatt needed 57 to win with 6 wickets left but that was as good as it got, once Furber fell for a very patient but effective 35, the innings imploded. Kuldeep Diwan who had a disappointing match by his standards was involved in a run out mix up with Biddle, he was then adjudged LBW himself, and the game was wrapped up with a brace of wickets for Shaf Ahmed and that man Fahim. Quatt falling short and Jed Edwards side seem to be finding things hard of late, meaning its Whitchurch who head into the final 2 weeks of the season with an 8 point lead.

Dan Bowen was a happy man when I spoke with him after the game “ *I said it would be a tough game and it really was, credit to Quatt they fight with everything they have, nothing was handed to us. It was a brilliant knock by Fahim absolutely outstanding, and we bowled really well as a unit as usual with our 7 (!) man attack We haven’t won anything yet though its Wem next week and we certainly won’t be underestimating them.*”



**Away from the top of the league it was a remarkable day with the other 5 matches all being won by teams in the bottom half..**

It looks like the game is up for **Frankton** after they fell to a 34 run defeat to **Shrewsbury 2nds**, who themselves have a real fighting chance of survival now. It could all have been so different at Hardwick Park after the visitors fell to 0-3, but a recovery job led by George Hughes (57) and Rob Foster (27), and finished by Thomas Richards (44), Harry Wassell (29), and Gabe Downs (30no) , got the visitors up to 232-9, with 3 wickets each for James Wigley and Ryan Kruger. Frankton were well set at 133-3 but when Ian Whitticase went for 56, Henry Hornby with a remarkable spell of 6-28 closed the game out and give Shrewsbury a really valuable 20 points. A result that leaves Frankton, who have given a good account of themselves this year, staring at an immediate return to Division 1.

Josh Darley enhanced his growing reputation with an exemplary captains innings of 86no as **Oswestry** eased to a 6 wicket win at **Wem**, a result that keeps them in the survival hunt. Earlier in the day Wem were dismissed for 201, Muhammed Irfan top scoring with 64, while that unsung cricketer Josh Gough added 51, but the bowling was all about Joe Monk who produced season best figures of 6-30 . In reply Darley found a handy partner in Shak Marshall as they added 108 for the 4<sup>th</sup> wicket , Marshall making 48 of them. Many observers feel they are too good to go down, but they may well need to win both their last 2 games to survive..

That is mainly down to those masters of late season recoveries **St Georges** who made it 3 white ball wins on the trot with a 14 run win over **Sentinel** who once again fell just short in a huge run chase. Muhammed Zaheer set the Dragons on their way with 62, there was 40 for Mo Khattak, but the Big Show was pro Faizan Khan who made it home and away centuries versus Sentinel with a 95 ball 112 as they totalled 294. For the Engines Jacob Binnersley took 4 wickets albeit while taking some punishment, but he further contributed with a rapid 51 in a run chase that for large parts looked likely to be successful, as himself, Tom Griffiths (45) and James Shaw (32), set about the home attack. Ed Ashlin (61 from 98) was holding it all together but when he was involved in a run out with Binnersley, the SCB coach failed to really kick on and despite a superb late cameo from Jonny Evans who whacked 53 no, the visitors fell 14 runs short of an unlikely win.

**Allscott** are timing their survival charge to perfection as they emerged 3 wicket winners against a **Ludlow** side who have gone very “beachy” as the end of the season approaches. Batting first all of the top 5 for Ludlow reached 20 but remarkably none went past 25, as Jason Summers enjoying a stellar end to the season took 5-24 with the visitors mustering 146 all out. Max Ferrington (39) who has had a good first year at this level put on 86 with Summers for the first wicket but when the latter went for 40, all of a sudden the run chase got rather tense. Callum Starling, another player enjoying his best season of top level cricket held it together with 21 as Allscott got over the line 7 down.

Last but by no means least **Madeley** travelled to **Shelton** and gained victory in another match that wasn't without its drama. Only Sam Matthews with 38 at number 7 contributed in a home score of 100, as Martin Boyle claimed a good 4-25, and Nad Ahmed took 3-38. It was a nervy reply by Madeley but at 70-3 with Shahzaib and Mithun at the crease they seemed to be heading for a vital 20, but a late collapse led to them limping over the line by 2 wickets, with Jack Morris taking 4-16 and Simon Jones adding to his seasons haul with 3-40 . Big win for Madeley who still aren't safe however.

**So 2 games to go, Whitchurch could seal the title next week if they beat Wem and Quatt lose at Sentinel but if the North Shropshire derby goes the way of Wem, a win for Quatt puts them back in charge. In the relegation scramble it's a massive game at Allscott as they host Oswestry.**

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