

Six in a row as Whitchurch launch title challenge

By Jamie Dowley

With rain wiping out 50% of the Premier programme, the six teams that played had a golden opportunity to gain on those that didn't and it was **Whitchurch** who seized the moment with a 6th straight win this time on the road at **Ludlow**. Missing captain Dan Bowen and brother Elliot, Whitchurch gave the armband to Shaf Ahmed, but it was Maz Hasnain who once again led the way with 38 at the top of the order. At 93-5 the innings could have gone either way but a valuable 69 partnership between Dan Hussain (50) and Simon Martin (22) tilted the game towards the visitors. That said some excellent slow bowling from Luke Miles (2-28), Joe Williams (2-38) and Jason Oakes (4-51), meant a total of 178 was not insurmountable. In the absence of leader of the pack Dan Bowen, Shaf gave the new ball to Shropshire Academy prospect Alex Heath who showed what he could do in a quality spell by cleaning up Miles and Oakes both for 14. However at 53-2 it was the introduction of Shabir Khan that made the biggest impact of all, in an inspired spell of controlled leg spin. His 11 overs proved practically unplayable and fully deserved his 5-20 figures, once again showing why he is very much knocking on the door for a Shropshire call up with longer form cricket on the horizon soon (yes the 3rd SCCL player I've mentioned so far this season, still no luck!). Ludlow ending all out for 113, with a valuable 24 points for Whitchurch, leaving them within a win of Quatt and setting up a huge fixture when they travel there in 2 weeks time.

Over to **Allscott Heath** where the hosts generally beat the weather, and once again visitors **St Georges** were involved in a low scoring clash. New ball pairing Matthew Hutchings and Callum Starling are establishing themselves as one of the best in the league, and made solid inroads into the Dragons batting. Only Austin Rowley with 33 made any notable contribution and after Starling had taken 3-39, it was left to Jason Summers (3-11), and Mo Adall (2-18) to mop up the innings at 112ao. Credit to St Georges though, they are proving to be real fighters at present and having beaten Allscott in the KO last week they weren't going to roll over. Openers Ferrington and Summers fell early, but Jack Case produced an excellent knock of 46, which set the innings up although when he was dismissed to leave Allscott 69-5, it needed a late cameo from Callum Starling to see them over the line and secure a 4th victory of the season. Allscott captain Jason Allen struck a delighted tone after the game, *"we are absolutely buzzing to be in 3rd place at this stage, yes it may be a false position for us, but we are going to enjoy it. The bowling side of it is going really well, with Matty Hutchings showing some good pace at the top and Cal, Summers and Adall all chipping him today too, didn't even need to bowl the overseas which is a great position to be in. Then with the bat I'm really pleased for Jack Case that was a great knock, and set the chase up for Cal to finish it with some superb hitting"*.

The county town derby between **Shrewsbury 2nds** and **Shelton** survived the weather with umpire William Clarke, having a day off from his Birmingham League duties praising both sides for their keenness to "get the game on". Players and spectators were rewarded with an excellent game of 35 over a side cricket that ultimately ended in a winning draw for Shrewsbury, but had several twists and turns along the way. As has happened regularly this season, Zane Beattie and Rob Foster led the way with the bat for the hosts, Gold Coast man Beattie enjoying a great season made 72, and Foster with 59no, this all after Shelton captain Simon Jones had taken 3 top order wickets in his excellent spell of 3-36 off 11. A late trio of scalps for Ryan Cummings meant Shrewsbury ended on 171-6, a score that looked more than useful, with Alex Ollerenshaw in the

2nds to lead the attack, a luxury the hosts had with a trio of county contracted bowlers in their 1sts this week. Ollershaw soon struck twice early but with Pabel Saha (33), Saleh Ahmed (54) and Nathan Sealy (35), all getting stuck in, the run chase was on. However a fine spell from Tyler Ibbotson who pegged the run rate back meant Shelton just ran out of overs and had to settle for a 13-9 draw. A good days work for both teams.

The race for the Division 1 title took a twist with Cound forcing their way to the top after a late win at home to Forton, at the expense of Bomere Heath who were abandoned at home to Newtown. Connor Glendenning now firmly back in form with 52, and new captain Andy Harrison with 45 helped Cound reach 223, while Harrison (who has taken over the captaincy for a while from Joe Yapp), then struck 3 times late on as Forton were dismissed for 155. With promotion places potentially in short supply this year (depending on what happens higher up), we will keep an eye on the Division 1 title race in coming weeks.

Week 9 sees Allscott host Madeley, while Ludlow will be desperate to get a win at battling St Georges.