

“All Hale Super Scott.”

By Jamie Dowley

A stunning all-round performance by Scott Hale of **Frankton** was the chief factor in the North Shropshire side putting an end to **Madeley's** 100% record, on a day where free scoring was at a premium in the **SCCL Premier Division**. Batting first the home side made steady progress with Dave Powell (25) and Ryan Kruger (39) both contributing, before Hale batting at four made a solid unbeaten 64 to lift the score to 188ao. Madeley relied heavily on slow bowling, with wickets shared among Mithun Jayawickrema (2-48), Nadeem Ahmed (2-23), Basim Ahmed (2-32) and Hamza Bhatti (3-38). After timing a similar run chase to perfection last week, Martin Boyle would have been confident of a 3rd straight win, but with Hale removing the dependable Salim Ahmed early, the Madeley reply was soon in big trouble. Hale continued making inroads into the top order, causing huge problems for all the batters, bowling his 15 overs right through and taking a stunning 6-13 with 8 maidens. Tom Welty and Kruger also chipped in with 2 wickets apiece to cap a superb 3 days for the Hardwicke Park men, after their excellent victory on Thursday over Whitchurch in the Premier 100. Captain Welty was delighted when I spoke to him after the game “it was a really pleasing performance , the perfect response to our bad result last week at Allscott. Scott led the way but there was plenty of support roles with bat and ball, and we can't wait to get back on the field for the local derby v Oswestry on Monday”

For **Whitchurch** there was no time to dwell on their beating on Thursday, as they made the short trip down the A49 for the much anticipated derby with **Wem**, the first time these two have met at Soulton Rd for 5 years. Both sides had big question marks over their batting coming into the game and this concern was more than justified in a renewal where the ball completely dominated. Dan Bowen struck early with 3 quick wickets to leave Wem 23-4 and despite a 21-run partnership between Irfan and Chris Peel (the highest in the match) once seamer Dan Hussain took them both out, the innings was turning into a horror story, and his 6 quick wickets off only 4.2 overs meant Wem were shot out for 74 in just 22.2 overs.

No Wem team is going to accept their fate lying down, and so it proved with Tom Astley bowling good pace with the new ball, and when Irfan was quickly introduced in the 3rd over this was suddenly an absorbing contest. Maz Hasnain departed for a quick 17, after which runs dried up although time was on their side and Iftikhar Khan made a patient 20 which meant at 46-2 it looked odds on an away win. The umpires were kept busy throughout and with Irfan bowling superbly it soon became 55-6 . With 4-17 off 15 overs the pro was assisted by the excellent Harry Chandler behind the stumps who was keeping like Ben Foakes, and it all meant Whitchurch had to work for every run. Dan Hussain held it together with 13no and completed a marvellous game by hitting the winning runs, a result that could turn their season around with three consecutive home games to come. Praise should go to the two experienced umpires **Mike Cliffe** and **Tim Barber** who kept cool heads under pressure in a game where it seemed every ball was an event.



Irfan appeals for a leg before, the umpire is Tim Barber who turns this one down.

They say Rome wasn't built in a day, but is this the season where **Quatt** finally get over the line in the title race, after several near misses in recent years? Its early days of course but with four maximum 24 point hauls they are the team to beat and this week it was the turn of **Sentinel** to enter the Colosseum that is the Quatt Oval. As usual Jed Edwards backs his batsmen to set a total but this week they did find it slightly hard going against a Sentinel attack led by the raw pace of Oliver Wilson who once again shone taking 4-35. Oliver Plank enjoying an outstanding early part to the season top scored with 44 and he was helped by Alex Biddle (20), Chris Miller (26) and Kuldeep (21) to reach a score of 149 that the visitors would have been delighted to chase at midday. However at 0-2 it wouldn't have been quite so alluring, as the tactic of opening with Kuldeep once again proved inspiring. His 13 overs reaped 3-19, and at 23-5 it seemed a home win was a formality. But with veteran Mal Serplett digging in for exactly an hour, James Shaw doing similar and Connor Cheshire playing well for 31, the Engineers looked to bat out the game. Edwards turned to Biddle and as so often he proved something of a finisher with 2-6, the win secured with just 19 balls remaining. Quatt chairman Howard Sanders was keen to play down the start to the season, "we have made an excellent start, everyone has done their jobs but we have won nothing yet and I see the next 3 away games as being really critical for us"

Allscott Heath made it back to back wins this time away at **Oswestry** and they move into fourth place in a congested table after another star show from Kuldeep Devatwal. For Oswestry the opening day win at St Georges seems a long time ago, and they could only muster 116 at Morda Rd as Devatwal coming on first change took 5-23 from 14 overs, assisted by last week's hero Calum Starling (2-35) and Jason Summers (3-35). Ruchira Bandarge was responsible for 55 of these but it was unlikely to be enough when it was Allscott's turn to bat provided Devatwal was at

the crease. Summers got the innings off to a steady start with 20, but wickets fell at regular intervals, and it was left to the overseas unbeaten 56 to see them home for a 4 wicket win . This makes him the leading run scorer in the league so far at an average of over 100. Once again, they have found an absolute gem, but others are also stepping up to the plate and these look exciting times for a club that could really be going places.

Ludlow are starting to hit their straps and they had a comfortable win at **Shrewsbury 2nds** who despite being tipped preseason on a local podcast to win the league have really struggled in recent weeks. Luke Miles was once again the main man, carrying his bat for an unbeaten 110 as the visitors reached 211-5 off 50. Tom Richards with 3 wickets helped prevent the innings running away from the London Roaders. Indeed it was Richards with the bat who held the reply together as he contributed 40 but Joe Williams and Jason Oakes (3-35 and 3-31 respectively) made short work of the Shrewsbury innings which ended on 106ao .

It was a routine day at the office for **Shelton** who are continuing to impress week by week, and they emerged 8 wicket winners against **St Georges** who remain winless. This time it was overseas starlet Nathan Sealy who shone, first by taking 5-34 to help dismiss the Telford side for 155, overseas pro Faizan Khan with 56 and Mike Myatt with 44 the chief contributors. Sadly they lost Sam Morgan still troubled by injury and Shelton then compounded Morgan's misery by knocking off the runs in short order. Pabel Saha with 57 no, Saleh Ahmed a quick 40 and Sealey stealing the show with a 19 ball 54, including 6 sixes to leave the field to rapturous applause as Shelton wrapped up the win inside 24 overs.

Onto the Bank Holiday Monday, the highlights include Frankton hosting Oswestry (for the first ever time in the league?) Wem play form team Shelton and Sentinel go to Allscott Heath.