

It's a 3-1 series win over local rivals for the Over 60s and 70s

Injuries to key players takes its toll but good performances still feature all round

With no fewer than seven players having to cry off injured after the weekend's round of club cricket it was no surprise that the Oxfordshire Seniors group 60s and 70s teams were not quite able to maintain their dominant start to the season.

The four Seniors' County Championship sides were engaged in a four match series with local rivals Warwickshire, which saw them win three games, while the Over 60s 4 th XI went down fighting against Worcestershire in their West of England League fixture.

The Over 60s 1 st XI went down by 38 runs in a run fest in their home game at Shipton under

Wychwood CC, while the Over 60s 4ths lost by eight wickets away to Worcestershire at Avoncroft CC, near Bromsgrove.

However on the upside the Over 60s 3 rd XI and the joint Oxs/Berks Over 70s XI both remain

unbeaten after three County Championship matches, while the Over 60s made it three out of four wins with an eight wicket win.

The Over 60s 3 rd XI won by 88 runs, and the Joint Ox/Berks Over 70s 1 st XI by seven wickets, while the Over 60s 2 nd XI were victorious by eight wickets. All thumping wins over the old rivals from across the county's northern border.

In the 1 st XI's home game at Shipton the visitors won the toss and unsurprisingly chose to bat on what is usually a batsman friendly surface.

And so it proved to be – as openers Chris Evans and Mark Eames settled in and posted a 78 run partnership in 15 overs before Evans had to retire with an injury. However Eames was looking well set and new batsman Mohammed Azam was soon scoring steadily as the new pair continued to pile on the pain for Oxon bowlers.

Azam eventually went for 39 in the 29 th over caught by Phil Manning off Ian Curtis' left arm spin but not before he and Eames had put on a further 78 for the second wicket. The hosts were looking right down the barrel.

However, Paul Hemming made a breakthrough for Oxon when he bowled new batsman Michael Palmer for 16, when the score was on 183, soon followed by Michael Daniels for four, bowled by Rupert Taylor, as both tried to force the pace in order to apply scoreboard pressure in the second innings.

But where they both perished trying Steve Hooper succeeded with style, as he and opener Eames blitzed the home side's bowling in the last five overs. Eames eventually went run out for a well made 114 in the 44 th over, while Hooper finished just one short of a remarkable half

century off just 26 balls in 27 minutes, to leave Warks on a dominant 264 for 4 from their 45 overs.

Of the Oxon bowlers only the perennially economical Steve Roberts managed to go at less than five an over during his nine over opening spell.

The home side had a tall order in front of them but skipper Darryl Woods and Nick Morman matched the visitors blow for blow when they posted 75 for the first wicket in 15 overs before Woods was lbw to David Payne for 42.

Morman meanwhile was striking the ball well and with new batsman Charlie Anderson kept the runs flowing before Anderson was again trapped lbw this time by Nigel Moore with the score on 140 in the 30 th over as the pressure of maintaining the best part of six runs an over

began to bite.

Morman and Paul Hemming tried to up the ante but the opener was next to go having made a fine 83 from 101 balls before he was caught by Kevin Bissett off Michael Palmer, having shepherded his side to 172 for 3 in the 35 th over with the small matter of 92 required in the last 10 overs.

Keeper Phil Manning and Hemming were now decidedly under the pump as the visitor's bowlers held their nerve and retained their stranglehold on the scoring rate. Manning – never one to 'die wondering' went for five - again lbw – this time to Mohammed Azam, followed soon afterwards by Hemming for 13 as the game began to slip away from Oxon with the score now 181 for 5 in the 37 th over.

And the double run out which followed soon after put Warks in full control. First to go just two runs later was Rupert Taylor for a single, rapidly followed by Micky Thomas for the same score for the addition of only another two runs.

The new pairing of David Warner and Steve Roberts did managed to rally things slightly as they added 17 for the eighth wicket, before Roberts became the third run out victim of the innings for 10, leaving Warner and Carl Needham with a mountain to climb to score the remaining 63 runs for victory in just four overs.

Needham made eight before he was caught by Mohammed off Moore with Warner not out on 18 and Ian Curtis not out on three as the hosts slipped to a 38 run defeat.

"We failed to control two key phases of play today and it's cost us the game," skipper Darryl Woods said afterwards.

"They got away from us in the last five overs of their innings and in that time scored the extra runs that put us under pressure with the bat. As a bowling and fielding unit we need to find a way to stop that.

"Despite that we were in good shape at the mid-point of the chase with nine wickets still in hand but then rather subsided when we needed to find a way to increase the scoring rate without taking the unnecessary risks which subsequently led to wickets falling in quick succession."

Next up the 1sts have a tough away trip to Worcestershire at Birlingham CC near Evesham. There was better news however from the Over 60s 3 Rd XI this week as they notched up their

third win in a row by a very comfortable 88 runs against Warwickshire, thanks to a quite remarkable innings of 132 from 80 balls by Tim House.

With the game being played at the Banbury XX Club ground skipper Clive Ricks won the toss and elected to bat on a wicket on which 200 is reckoned to be a par score. Dave Brook was promoted to open the innings with Andy Haynes and the pair made a decent start posting 20 before Brook was the first to go for nine when he was caught by Andy Sturrock off Tim Harrison.

Haynes was then joined by Steve Partington and the pair moved the score along to 52 before Haynes - looking well set and scoring freely - went for 30 lbw to Rick Allen, followed two runs later by Partington, making the score 54-3 in the 18 th over, as Allen and Harrison kept things admirably tight for Warks with the ball.

However, House and Howard Lancaster were now at the wicket and the pair soon began to repair the damage as they added 50 for the fourth wicket before Lancaster - looking well set -went for 16 caught by Neil Thorne off the bowling of Steve Griffin. Meanwhile House was moving up through the gears.

Simon Dickens came and went for just 6 caught and bowled by Andy Sturrock, with the

score on 112, but next man in Steve Kelly proved a perfect foil for House as he put the Warks bowling to the sword. The pair put on 84 for the sixth wicket with Kelly making 22 off 35 balls before Russell Lowry sneaked one through to bowl him.

At the other end House was striking the ball well on the way to posting 84 of his eventual 132 in boundaries as the total raced on well past 200. At the close of the first innings Oxon had compiled 246 for eight, with House eventually perishing in the pursuit of further quick runs when caught by Sturrock off Griffin.

The Warks opening attack of Allen and Harrison both returned excellent figures of 1-27 off nine and 2-26 off nine respectively, which gave the visitors the edge at the start of the innings, however thereafter the change bowlers all struggled to gain any control as House cut loose.

Needing to score at five and a half an over the Warks reply was soon in trouble as the left arm inswing of Richard Cook first accounted for Clive Lee - lbw for nought off the fourth ball of his spell - and then fellow opener Masood Pathan for four when the score was just 13 in the fifth over.

However, the next pairing of Matt Whitthread and Chris Trinder first dug and then kept the scoreboard ticking along as they added 60 for the third wicket before Trinder was winkled out by the spin of Steve Wilson who bowled him for 24 off 41 deliveries, with the score by then on 73 for three.

Skipper Lowery tried to emulate Trinder but Wilson's spin soon accounted for him for just three caught by Dave Brook, soon followed by Nigel Foxall for seven – again bowled by Wilson. With the score now at 91 for 5 with more than half the overs bowled the 246 required by Warks to win looked a long way off.

And so it proved to be as Simon Dickens chipped in by trapping Rick Allen lbw, while Steve Partington first bowled Andy Sturrock and then trapped Stephen Griffin lbw, leaving the obdurate Whitthread on 68 not out, which he ground out from a marathon 132 balls during his near three hours at the crease, with the Warks innings closing at 158 for eight.

For Oxon Richard Cook did the important early damage that put the hosts in control with 2-18 from six overs, while wily Steve Wilson wheeled away with fellow spinners Steve Kelly and Steve Partington in the middle overs, during which the trio returned figures of 3-23, 0-22 and 2-24 respectively, off a total of 26 overs, which reduced the run rate to a crawl and effectively put the visitors out of the game.

Needless to say Skipper Clive Ricks was yet again delighted with his sides all round performance. "Tim's knock was quite brutal at times but a pleasure to watch nevertheless," he said. "Our total was always putting them under pressure and in the second innings we put in a good team performance to close out the result from a strong position."

Next up the thirds are away to Berkshire at Bradfield CC near Reading.

The Over 60s 2 nd XI travelled to Moseley CC in Solihull for their game against Warwickshire

and returned home with an excellent away win by eight wickets.

The hosts won the toss and opted to get first use of a hard track and an outfield that offered full value for the batsman's shots even in mid-May. So it was looking like it might be a long hard hot shift in the field for the visitors on a warm sunny afternoon, with a long chase to follow in the second innings. But as is so often the case cricket can be a 'funny old game'. Mike Thornton and Richard Jackson opened the batting for Warks, with Anwar Pervaiz and Graham Nelson opening the attack for Oxon. And it was Pervaiz who struck the first blow when he hurried one on to Thornton who was well caught by Andy Slater at cover, when the

score was just 13 in the fifth over.

Phil Clarke then joined Jackson, but the pair had only added a further 15 when Nelson struck having Jackson taken at mid-on by Mike Howat when he failed to connect properly with an ambitious lofted drive.

With Clarke looking solid his new partner Chris Layton needed to back him up and steady the ship but he too was soon gone when - with the score on 33 - he edged a sharp low catch to keeper Peter Howe off the bowling of Pervaiz.

New batsman Dave Rogers battled hard alongside the excellent Clarke and the pair did manage to add 45 before Clarke - frustrated by the excellent control of Stuart Bullen's left arm spin - tried to get down the track to hit over the top and 'clothed' a simple catch to Nelson at mid-on just two short of a well-deserved half century.

With the score now 78-4 Warks badly needed a partnership and things looked to be heading in the right direction when Rogers and Mike Weir added 21- albeit somewhat slowly.

However, Bullen's nagging accuracy again paid dividends when he trapped Rogers lbw for 18 and the hosts now needed Weir to bat through with the tail to post a competitive score. With the overs ticking away Weir mixed lusty drives and sweeps with well-placed singles, as he was well supported by Steve Dellow who had made 15 before he was bowled by Adrian Manger trying to find the boundary.

Manger then also bowled Weir for a well made 57 in the 43rd over before Nigel Batsford and David Acton closed the innings on 18 and six not out respectively leaving Warks with an under par 183 for 7 from their 45 overs.

Bullen was the pick of the Oxon bowlers with 2-20 from his nine overs, well supported by Nelson, Perviaz, Pykett, Slater and Manger with figures of 1-27, 2-40, 0-23, 0-40 and 2-31 respectively.

In reply Warks were opposed by a new look opening partnership in the shape of two left handers - Johnny Morton and Richard Clapp – the latter on promotion from the 3rds and not having opened the batting in recent years.

Nevertheless the two made a bright start and had posted 24 runs in six overs when a calling mishap left Morton well short of his ground for 14. Clapp was then joined by Mike Howat who together added a further 27 runs to bring up the 50 in the 17 th over before Howat edged a beauty from John Patton which was well taken by the ever-reliable Clarke behind the stumps for five.

That however was the final wicket to fall as the inform Simon Oldfield joined Clapp at the wicket after which the pair soon got to work on knocking off the 133 runs required to win - in contrasting styles.

Clapp - a typically gritty left handed opener - ground out his runs in hard-run leg side singles, with the occasional dash from his defensive bunker for a lofted heave over the infield, while

Oldfield stood tall and hit the ball hard with heavy hands on both the front and back foot through the offside.

But it proved to be a most effective combination to which the hosts' attack found it difficult to bowler a consistent line and length offering plenty of risk free scoring opportunities.

And the numbers tell a story. Clapp batted through the innings for 85 not out from 140 balls with 10 fours and occupied the crease for just short of two and a half hours, while Oldfield struck eight boundaries in his 62 not out at a run a ball in an hour less.

Oxon won at a canter with six overs and eight wickets to spare, while the toiling Warks bowlers only had the one wicket to celebrate the other being 'donated' by their opponents.

After the game skipper Robin Pykett said: "What a great win! When we lost the toss and they

batted I thought we would be chasing at least 200 on that pitch, but the bowlers did us proud and kept it so tight from ball one that they got frustrated and got themselves out. After that Richard and Simon made it look pretty straightforward with risk free batting at three or four runs per over, until the bowlers tired when they were able to accelerate the rate somewhat." Next up is another road trip for the seconds when they take on Somerset at Stourton and Kilmington CC.

And in the final fixture of the quartet against the Bears the joint Oxs/Berks Over 70s made the long journey to Harborne in Birmingham, where they lost the toss and the hosts opted to bat on a ground with a reputation for fast scoring.

Things began brightly for Oxs/Berks as Nigel Walker made the early breakthrough when he bowled Neil Spragg for just a single in the third over. However that brought in Richard Harper in to join Dave Swinburn and the pair soon began to regularly find the boundary as they posted 125 for the second wicket in 24 overs.

Harper was the first of the pairing to go but not before he had completed his half century, when he was bowled by Steve Partington for 55. And it was the same bowler who quickly removed new batsman Harold Turner for just eight with the score on 154 in the 31st over. However at the other end Swinburn was remorselessly grinding on towards his century. Bob Ball made 14 in 30 balls in support of Swinburn but was eventually caught by Derek Watts off Phil Ridgeway when the score was on 186 and just 11 runs later Swinburn also departed when he was stumped by Peter Howe again off Ridgeway, but not before he completed his century which included 12 fours and two and a half hours at the crease, having taken his side through to just short of 200 runs.

The Warks innings eventually closed on 227-8 with Dave Murphy making 12 before he was bowled by Ken Fuller with Brian Hopkins on 13 not out and keeper Dave Edge on 1 not out. For the visitors Steve Partington and Phil Ridgeway caught the eye when bowling with figures of 2-45 from nine and 2-50 from nine - both bowling when the slog was on.

In reply the Oxs/Berks run chase didn't get off to the best of starts when the normally rock-like Charlie Anderson went for just nine when he edged a catch to keeper Edge off the bowling of Bob Penrose.

Ronnie Brock replaced Anderson and together with Derek Watts the two repaired the early damage and then proceeded to add 81 for the second wicket in just 12 overs to keep the run chase on track before Brock was lbw to Penrose for a rapid 43 from 48 balls taking the score to 95-2 in the 17th over.

Phil Ridgeway then joined Watts and the pair were keeping the runs ticking over nicely to stay on track when Penrose managed to run a ball across the opener to induce the edge to keeper Edge, thereby dismissing Watts for 36 off 40 balls.

And with the score now 113 for three and a further 115 required by the visitors to win, there was an opening for the Warks bowlers to work on as new batsman Jerry Senior came to the crease.

However, there was no quick breakthrough and no further wickets fell in the game as the Oxs/Berks fourth wicket pair first consolidated and then emphatically took the game away from the hosts.

With Ridgeway as the dominant partner, the pairing knocked off the 115 required in just 15 overs, with ten more to spare to lead their side to a comfortable seven wicket win.

Ridgeway made a sparkling 80 not out from just 55 balls including 64 in boundaries in an hour and 17 minutes, while the resolute Senior was the perfect foil as he compiled a patient 34 from 47 in just over the hour.

For Warks Bob Penrose was the only wicket taker among the seven bowlers used, returning the excellent figures of 3-40 from his nine very tidy overs.

Skipper Adrian Manger was delighted with the result as his side have now gone three games unbeaten. "We said before this season started we had to make sure we didn't get off to the same shaky start that left us playing catch up last year. Opening up with three wins in a row shows how far we've come as a team in 12 months – especially winning comfortably by closing out big run chases as we did today."

Earlier in the week an injury-weakened Oxfordshire Over 70s 1st XI went down to their first defeat of the season when they lost by eight wickets to Worcestershire in their West of England Cricket League fixture at Avoncroft CC.

Stand in Oxon skipper Tim Gush won the toss and elected to bat and opened up with the inform Ralph Orchard for the visitors. However, it was the hosts that struck the opening blow when Orchard was caught off the bowling of Andy Pittman by Dick Brown for nought with the scoreboard as yet unused!

Keeper Jerry Senior then joined Gush at the wicket and the pair proceeded without further alarms to add 45 for the next wicket before Gush was trapped in front by Dave French for 26 just as he was looking well set.

New batsman Peter Burrows also settled in nicely and he and Senior again looked to have things under control when Senior this time was caught by Martin Woodward off Pittman for 16 with the score on a somewhat disappointing 57-3 in the 16th over.

Burrows was starting to strike the ball well and he and Nick Warry added 30 to the total before Warry was bowled by Adrian Pawsey, for an uncharacteristic eight from 21 balls - and just 13 runs later Burrows was also gone - for a well-made 39 leaving the visitors in trouble with just 100 runs on the board and half the side now back in the pavilion.

Tim Yates and Howard Voisey then added a further 20 before Yates perished – bowled by Glyn Thomas for 16 - shortly after which Voisey also went stumped by Steve Coleman off Pawsey for three and Ran DaSilva, soon followed bowled by Thomas for just four, leaving the score on a sorry looking 133 for eight.

Colin Houseman hit three fours in his 15 runs during a brief counter attack but when he was bowled by Woodward and Nigel Walker by Tom Moss for five the innings closed on 147 all out with five overs going unused.

The pick of the hosts bowlers was Adrian Pawsey with 3-29 from eight overs well supported by Andy Pittman with 2-20 from his eight.

In reply Worcestershire didn't get off to the best of starts and there was an early glimmer of hope for Oxon when Colin Houseman's left arm inswing soon accounted for Colin Hobbs, lbw for just eight with the score on eight at the end of the second over, with Nigel Walker as usual also conceding nothing at the other end.

Under no pressure new batsman David Goring held up one end as opener Richard Fisher went about his work and soon had the scoreboard ticking over nicely as the pair added 53 for the second wicket in just 10 overs, ably assisted by a rapidly rising number of extras – or free runs as they are more commonly known!

Ran De Silva eventually trapped Goring in front for 11, but thereafter Fisher, Glyn Thomas and the extras column never looked in any trouble as they knocked off the required runs in just 30 overs, with Fisher making 43 not out and Thomas 32 not out. Unlike the two batsmen, the extras total did however manage to reach its half century!

Of the bowlers Nigel Walker showed his usual excellent control of line and length as he closed down one end completely at the start of the innings to return the remarkable figures

of eight overs 0-7!

After a 'bad day at the office' regular skipper David Beck - who was one of a number of key players missing from the side - said; "Pretty clearly today was not one of our better games, but we've now got a week off in which to get people fit and back in the side including regulars like Jim Head, Adrian Beecroft and Roger Hutchence."