

## **Back to winning ways!**

*Three out of four wins as the seconds get a week off!*

It was back to winning ways for the Oxfordshire Seniors Group sides this week as there were County Championship wins for the joint Oxs/Berks Over 70s and the Over 60s 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> XIs, while the 2<sup>ND</sup> XI had their break week and the Over 70s 1st XI went down in a close fought game in their West Of England League game.

The Over 60s 1<sup>st</sup> XI were away as they travelled to Rugeley where they took on Staffordshire, who won the toss and elected to bat and eventually posted a total of 182 all out in 43.5 overs.

The innings was anchored by opener Steve Aston, who in a marathon two and three quarter hour stay at the crease played superbly for 98 runs from 120 balls, striking nine fours and one six. However, the rest of the batting lineup struggled, with only Wayne Morray (22 off 37) and Paul Wilkins (23 off 37) providing any kind of support, leaving the total looking at best adequate rather than defensible.

In the field Oxfordshire showed their versatility to the full. With regular keeper Phil Manning a covid victim this week skipper Darryl Woods took the gloves as his bowlers; Roberts, Mahoney, Curtis, Needham and Hemming, kept things tight and chipped away at the hosts batting.

However, when a breakthrough was needed Woods then passed the gloves to opening bowler Steve Roberts and then proceeded to bag 3 wickets for 19 runs in 3.5 overs including the wicket of Aston, while well supported by Mahoney (2 for 39) and Curtis (1 for 42). Roberts also proved his worth as a stand-in keeper by completing a stumping off his skipper.

And there was more to come from Oxfordshire's man for all seasons as his side chased down the hosts' target with ease by nine wickets, finishing on 186/1 in 40.2 overs, with Woods unbeaten on 83 runs off 113 balls, brilliantly supported by Nick Moorman with 68 off 99 balls and Charlie Anderson 16 not out.

"A much better performance this week against an unbeaten side," said skipper Woods after the game. "At no point did we let them gain any semblance of control - even when Steve Aston was compiling his big score we kept the other end tight and put pressure on the other batsman. An excellent team performance."

Clive Ricks' unbeaten Over 60s 3<sup>rd</sup> XI were at home this week and entertained Somerset at Kingston Bagpuize CC, where they won the toss and elected to field

The visitors struggled throughout their innings against a disciplined Oxfordshire bowling attack, managing only 128 all out in 42.3 overs, with only Andy Carson's solid innings of 52 runs off 74 balls, with eight fours giving them anything to bowl at. Richard Hutchinson (23 off 55) and Jeremy Slade (13 off 21) were the only other scores of note.

Oxfordshire's bowling unit was led by Tim Riley, whose left arm spin returned the excellent figures of 4 for 27 runs in nine overs, ably supported by Steve Kelly (2 for 27) and Stephen Wilson (2 for 10).

The hosts then chased down the target comfortably, reaching the 129 required for the loss of just three wickets in just 26.5 overs. The foundation of their chase was laid by Andy Haynes'

aggressive 43 off 45 balls, including eight boundaries. After which Tim Riley (42 not out off 28) completed a good all round performance to guide his team home.

For Somerset only Kevin Dornan (1 for 24 in 9 overs) and Duncan Nash (1 for 24 in 4 overs) picked up wickets.

Skipper Ricks was well pleased with his team's performance commenting: "Today's was a well-rounded team performance which showed the depth of both our batting and bowling. Four wins from four – I couldn't have asked for a better start to the season, but there's still a lot to do against some very good sides in the coming weeks."

Meanwhile the Over 70s 1st XI went down fighting in a very closely contested West of England Cricket League home fixture at Steventon CC against Somerset, in which the visitors eventually triumphed by 29 runs.

Oxfordshire won the toss and opted to field first. Somerset made good use of their time at the crease, with Peter Rebera leading the way with a patient 76 off 98 balls, well-supported by Brian Pearson (50 not out) and Andrew Brent Cook (27 not out). Extras also played a significant role, contributing 52 runs to Somerset's final total of 217/4 in their allotted 40 overs.

The Oxfordshire bowlers put in a solid shift, with Colin Houseman (1/53), Ran De Silva (1/39), Suresh Patel (1/37), and Tim Gush (1-36) - each picking up a wicket.

In response, Oxfordshire fought hard but ultimately fell short, posting 188/8 in their 40 overs. Jerry Senior was the standout performer with an aggressive 69 from 55 balls, well supported by Ralph Orchard with 34. However, Somerset's disciplined bowling attack, led by Robert Tozer (2/24) and Brian Pearson (2/15), ensured the visitors held firm to secure the win.

After the game Oxfordshire skipper David Beck said: "This match showcased the real competitive spirit of seniors cricket, with impressive performances with both bat and ball from both sides in an engaging contest. It was just a shame we had to come out on the wrong end of the result – mainly because we unfortunately conceded rather too many extras!"