

## **Over 70s keep up their winning ways**

*But Mulford makes a ton in vain as 60s seconds lose in a run fest at Horspath*

The joint Oxon/Berks Over 70s continued their excellent season with a comfortable eight wicket win over Warwickshire in their home fixture at Banbury XX CC.

Acting Oxs/Berks skipper Ian Stuart won the toss and elected to bowl first on a very warm afternoon after which the habitually miserly opening attack of Trevor Spindler and Nigel Walker ensured that Warwickshire's innings struggled for any kind of momentum, with no batsman really getting going.

Neil Spragg (28 off 59) and Richard Harper (23 off 33) provided some resistance, while Brian Hopkins (15) and Paul Finlan (16) chipped in with decent middle-order contributions, and David Edge (12 not out) was left unbeaten as wickets tumbled around him. Extras also played their part with 28 in total, as Warwickshire laboured to 149/9 in their allotted 40 overs.

The Oxs/Berk's bowling unit was as clinical as ever with Alan Weaver leading the way with 4 for 26 runs, well supported by Trevor Spindler (1/21), Steve Partington (1/31), Phil Ridgeway (1/6), and Chad Cudjoe (1/14).

Chasing a fairly modest total the host's lost Derek Watts early - lbw for 0 - but skipper Stuart and Charlie Anderson soon steadied the ship with a match winning second-wicket stand of 70 in just 14 overs, before Stuart was stumped by Edge off the bowling of Alan Evans for a run a ball 52.

Anderson - as ever - was the backbone of the innings with a classy 56 not out off 70 balls, while Phil Ridgeway added a breezy 26 not out off 26, with five boundaries, to see the hosts home to victory in just 25.4 overs, finishing on 150/2.

Skipper Stuart said after the game: "This was another convincing win for the Oxs/Berks 70s, in which we always felt we were in control thanks to our disciplined bowling, which set things up for a composed batting display to deliver another notch in the win column!"

Also back to winning ways again were the Over 60s 4<sup>th</sup> XI in their latest West of England Seniors Cricket League fixture against Worcestershire at Horley CC, where they ran out winners by 26 runs.

Oxon won the toss and elected to bat but things didn't go quite as planned when Tim Gush was bowled for nought in the fifth over. However, at the other end Adrian Beecroft was going well and despite Pete Burrows also going for just three, Beecroft and new batsman Ralph Orchard soon had the scoreboard ticking over nicely.

The opener had made a composed 39 from 59 balls with six fours when he was somewhat surprisingly caught by Steve Coleman off the bowling of Martin Woodward, having taken the score close to 60 in partnership with Orchard.

But having done the hard work the keeper batsman wasn't about to waste the effort involved as he put together two more crucial partnerships of 60 with Roger Hutchence (29) and 40 with Hugo Ritson-Thomas - 26 not out off 14 balls, which saw the hosts through to a final total of 197 for 7.

For Worcestershire the wickets were shared around with Glyn Thomas impressing with his 2/25 from eight overs.

In response to Oxon's useful total Worcestershire worked hard and got the chase off to a good if somewhat steady start as openers Colin Hobbs and Richard Fisher posted 56 for the first wicket in 16 overs before Fisher went for 25 off 60 balls when he was run out.

However, Hobbs batted steadily on and looked set for a well made 50 when he fell just two runs short off 98 balls as he and Joe Davis added 72 runs for the third wicket before Hobbs went with the score on 128 in the 32<sup>nd</sup> over,

Acceleration of the scoring rate was needed as the visitors looked to score the required 60 runs in the remaining eight overs, but despite Davis making 50 not out from 63 and Glyn Thomas 16 not out, the target proved to be just out of reach as they eventually closed on 167 for 3, with seven wickets still intact.

Yet again it was Nigel Walker's relentless accuracy that put the visitor's behind the required rate, as he turned in a remarkable 0-14 from his eight overs, well supported by Hugo Ritson-Thomas' left arm wrist spin with 0-26 from eight. Nick Warry and Nigel Douglas were the only wicket takers.

Skipper David Beck was well pleased with a good all-round performance. "We batted steadily despite a bit of shaky start, with Ralph yet again ensuring we got a defendable total on the board.

"With the ball Nigel squeezed the life out of them and ensured they were under pressure from ball one, after which all the other bowlers did their bit to ensure we never gave them the chance to recover the rate despite having plenty of wickets in hand

The most remarkable result of the week was the Over 60s 2<sup>nd</sup> XI's home clash with Somerset at Horspath CC, in which over 520 runs were scored, of which, sadly Oxfordshire and centurion opener Ivan Mulford were on the wrong side of the result.

However, as an advert for seniors cricket games don't get much better than this one.

Somerset won the toss, asked the hosts to bat and then watched them pile up an intimidating 262 for 4 in their 45 overs. After which - unfazed - they then chased down their target with a couple of overs to spare despite at one stage being 14-3!

Offered first use of a good batting track the hosts made no mistake as opening pair Ivan Mulford and Tom Scrase were soon into their stride as they posted a rapid 87 for the first wicket before Scrase departed for 40

New batsman Mike Howat quickly settled in as Mulford began to up the scoring rate and the pair added another 86 runs before Howat was caught and bowled for 39.

Tim House and Mulford then added further 50 for the third wicket during which time Mulford brought up his century before being dismissed for 110 from 132 balls, with 11 fours and two sixes in his two and a half hour stay at the crease, with Oxfordshire closing on 262 for four.

During an innings of heavy scoring - of the visitors bowlers Steve Sheppard's 0-23 from nine was outstanding and was well supported by Chris Brewer with 0-36 from nine.

In reply Somerset's made a disastrous start as home skipper Andy Slater sent back Brooker, Borton and Walker for the collective total of one run, reducing them to just 14 for 3 in the third over.

At the other end from this carnage was opener Alistair Barr who together with new batsman David Noyes, were faced with the small matter of 248 runs required to win and only seven wickets left.

Both batted calmly and picked off the runs steadily at first as they compiled an 89 run partnership for the fourth wicket with Barr making 56 before he was bowled by Rupert Taylor.

Noyes was then joined by skipper Hugh Bellamy and the pair continued the good work as they put on a match winning stand of 151 in just over 20 overs as they rattled along at seven and half runs an over, before Bellamy went just four short of fifty to put the visitors in control with just eight needed.

It was a bit of a nervy finish as Noyes was also dismissed soon afterwards for a wonderful match-winning 118 from 123 balls including 15 boundaries, as Somerset eventually reached their target with four wickets and two overs to spare.

Oxfordshire's bowlers had their moments on a good batting surface with skipper Slater's (3/26) the pick alongside Tim House with (2/22) but as a unit they couldn't quite get the control they needed to create any pressure once Noyes and Bellamy got going.

"We didn't go for the jugular when we had them three down and consequently paid the price," said Andy Slater after the game. "Credit where credit is due - it was a hell of a fight back and they batted superbly but we have to learn to find that bit extra to seize those key moments in games when they come along that are the difference between winning and losing."

Both the Over 60s 1<sup>st</sup> XI and 3<sup>rd</sup> XI's games against Staffordshire at Banbury XX CC and Warwickshire at Earlswood CC respectively, were called off due to forecast heavy rain. The 1<sup>st</sup> XI fixture has been rescheduled for July 29<sup>th</sup> at the same venue.