

Dragons off bottom spot in basement nailbiter while...

Darley hundred (and sportsmanship) lights up Heath Rd

St Georges have shown tremendous spirit in recent weeks and the Dragons produced another gutsy display in a game they knew they needed to win against fellow strugglers **Shrewsbury 2nds**. With batting having been the main cause of their worries this season they would have been delighted with overseas pro Faizan Khan scoring his 2nd hundred in three weeks, as his 101no was the chief factor in a total of 216-6. Shrewsbury kept things fairly tight throughout with Thomas Dix the pick of their attack with 2-20 off 10. In reply Luke Thornton impressed with 60 at the top of the order, but with Zane Beattie departing for a rare duck it looked in the bag for Georges at 110-6. Azaad Rafique (5-31) proved particularly troubling for the away batsmen but when he had finished his allocation the game opened up for Rob Foster to use all his ability to try and chase down the target. Josh Anders helped Foster out with 20, but when last man Gabe Downs joined Foster 37 runs were still needed with time running out. That became 15 off the last over, Shrewsbury scrambled 12 runs off the first 5 of them, and with Downes on strike for the last ball, Faisal Khan was able to close the game out. Heartbreak for Foster who finished on 60no, but great scenes of jubilation for Sam Morgan and his side who are off the bottom and starting to drag other teams towards them in the table.

A chanceless hundred from Josh Darley wasn't quite enough to give **Oswestry** a win at **Whitchurch** in a thrilling game that went down to the penultimate ball of the day. With captain Alex Huxley departing first ball to home prospect Alex Heath, Darley was in at number 3 early and batted for almost the entire innings for a superb 109. Shak Marshall and Matt Richards both chipped in with 32 as the visitors totalled a competitive 234. Heath the most impressive of the home attack with 2-26 off his 10 overs, while captain Dan Bowen struck 4 times late on to end with 4-41. Whitchurch's reply was off to a flyer with the 50 coming up in the 7th over and at 105-1 off 18 a home win seemed inevitable. The game turned on Maz Hasnain running himself out for 58, as despite a composed 48 from Saad Wasim, the runs started to dry up somewhat and with 12 overs remaining 80 runs were still required with 5 wickets left. It was then down to Shafiq Ahmed (48no) to use all his experience to get Whitchurch close. With 10 balls left they needed 10 and the ball went out to Darley on the boundary who took an excellent catch but in doing so stepped on the rope. Showing great sportsmanship he immediately signalled 6 runs, a fine gesture with no one else around him. Despite another late wicket Bowen was able to strike the penultimate ball for four with the scores level and keep his side still in the title hunt.

Quatt produced another professional performance on the road at **Allscott**, to make it 11 wins from 11 played. Tom Whitney and Oliver Plank again did their job at the top of the order, albeit rather more circumspectly than usual, but with wickets in hand they allowed the middle order to score 100 runs in the last 12 overs. Whitney with 61 top scored, while Ryan Wheldon who has cemented the number 3 slot, struck a fluent 51. Allscott bowlers to their credit all plugged away gamely, Kuldeep Devatawal the pick with 2-30. The home side were soon in trouble at 8-3, with Wheldon getting a rare chance to take the new ball impressing with 3-12, and it was only that man Devatwal with 57 who was able to offer a notable contribution as the Allscott innings ended on

113. Certainly no disgrace in the loss for Allscott, while Quatt are starting to tick off the games as they look destined for that long awaited title success..

Sentinel were on the receiving end of an overseas pro hundred for the third week running, as they ran into a Jason Oakes inspired **Ludlow** who as predicted is finding the white ball game much more to his liking . At 22-4 the home side needed their skipper to deliver and he duly obliged with an outstanding 125 , and with Sam Edwards (38) and Josh Bowen (29) supporting Oakes they would have been delighted to make 239. Oliver Wilson was the pick of the Sentinal attack with 3-42. The chances of a successful run chase looked minimal once the Engines had been reduced to 59-5 and subsequently 116-7 with Danny Bradley taking 3 wickets and Oakes bagging 4 himself. But a superb 72no from Connor Cheshire assisted by 38 from Jonny Evans got their side within 13 runs of victory although in truth Ludlow always looked slightly ahead of the game with an unrealistic 20 needed from the final over.

It was a walk in the (Hardwick) Park for **Shelton** as they underlined their top four credentials with a nine wicket victory at a **Frankton** side who are enjoying a real feast or famine season. Batting first the home side lost all their top three with just 6 runs on the board and it was only a run a ball 26 from number nine Will Evans that got the total up to 76. Captain Simon Jones with 3-8 was the pick of the attack, while there were four more scalps for Ross Griffiths who is now the joint leading wicket taker in the division from non overseas players. In reply Shelton raced to victory inside 15 overs Pabel Saha with 30no while Greg Smith on his second appearance was again not out with 24.

Madeley endured a huge collapse at **Wem** that eventually ensured the home side ran out four wicket winners. It could have all been so different at Saulton Road with the visitors ticking along nicely at 82-1, but when Salim Ahmed was dismissed for 31, the innings quickly unfolded and they were expunged for a total of 110 . For once Tom Astley had to play third fiddle to his brothers as older brother Jim Astley took 3-18 and younger sibling Harry gained 2-29. Muhammed Irfan playing with a bad shoulder was still able to bowl as accurately as ever and ended with 4-6 . Wem's reply wasn't without a scare as three Madeley bowlers took a pair of wickets each but Chris Peel held the innings together and his 38no ensured they got the job done inside 20 overs.

Next week sees Ludlow travel to Quatt while Shelton entertain Whitchurch in what are sure to both be competitive renewals.