

Wellington triumph in derby thriller.

Thornton heroics in vain as champions go top for first time

By Jamie Dowley



At Orelton Park, the rearranged derby between **Wellington** and **Allscott Heath** produced a classic low scoring contest that captivated a large Bank Holiday crowd, and it was the hosts who ultimately emerged victorious, a result that takes them to the Premier summit for the first time this campaign, with just two games of the regular season left

With Dan Vaughan winning the toss and as usual electing to bowl, the visitors lost Jason Summers early but then solidified their innings with in form Maz Hasnain playing the anchor role. Having reached 53-1, Vaughan introduced Matt Simmonds and Josh McDonald and when Simmonds got through the defence of overseas pro Kuldeep Devatwal , the visitors middle and lower order wilted in the face of some excellent bowling by the pair. From 89-3, Allscott lost

5 wickets for 10 runs, McDonald bowling accurate medium pace with the keeper up, and Simmonds offspin having a real fizz to it, as Hasnain watched on from the other end. Eventually he succumbed too, going for 45, and a total of 133ao never really looked enough at the halfway stage. Simmonds ended with excellent figures of 10-2-26-4, while McDonald went one better with 5-26 to continue his stunning 2nd half to the season.

134 was the target for Dan Vaughan's side and with Callum Starling still out with a groin injury, Allscott were a quality seamer light, but captain Luke Thornton (pictured) grabbed the new ball and produced a superb display of genuine quick bowling. With weather threatening at various stages, the batters were keen to get on with it but Thornton proved unplayable to reduce the champions to 55-5, grabbing all 5. At that stage only Dan Vaughan with 23 had looked at ease against the pace and when he was perhaps harshly adjudged caught behind for 23, and Dave Laird was cleaned up 2nd ball, the pressure was firmly on the two bowling heroes Simmonds and McDonald to get back into the contest. Simmonds, who has struggled in recent weeks, looked in superb touch, with some crisp and clean hits taking the score up to 99, but when he was adjudged LBW to Thornton for 37, it was game on once again. By now Thornton was bowled out, his 6-32 off 10 overs was as impressive as it reads. It was thus over to the spinners Devatwal and Summers to maintain the pressure, that the former did by making it 103-7, and then 117-8 with Hugh Morris and Ben Pilkington at the crease as the home support and benches had the heebie-jeebies. Morris has moved down the pecking order bowling wise recently with McDonald stepping up, but he is more than capable of batting much higher and here he kept his cool under the most severe pressure. In cahoots with Pilkington they took 11 off a Devatwal over and then ended the contest with a huge 6 to finish the game amidst jubilant scenes.

Dan Vaughan "It was another nervy win but further demonstration of our strength in depth having Hugh come in at number 8 and take us over the line. A great collective bowling and fielding put us in a good position. The pitch was fine, a few blips with the bat but credit to Allscott and Luke Thornton in particular, he bowled a superb spell to give them a sniff. Thankfully we were still able to find a way through"

So what does all this mean? Defeat would have all but ended Wellington's hopes but much to the chagrin of Quatt and St Georges they are now in the box seat. Win their last 2 games , both at home to Sentinel and Shrewsbury 2nds, they are champions again for a 3rd time in 4 seasons. If they slip up then the last day contest between Quatt and St Georges will take on monumental meaning. For Allscott their title race is over, but they showed once again here that even if they lack the depth of other sides they will fight for their lives in every game.