



Devon Cricket Board over 50's - Review Of 2004 Season

With several additions to an already strong squad, as usual, the hopes were high, as the Devon 's Over 50's approached the start of the 2004 season. After a few early season friendly, come trial games, the squad set out on their first Championship game away to Dorset at Dean Park in Bournemouth . Unfortunately, Devon were denied the services of some of their key players. The absence of Bob Eames & Julian Page from the top order would have taken a strain on any team in the whole competition, and so it proved as Devon struggled to only 165 all out. Only Bob Macey with a typically brash 65 and Brent Howard with his annual knock against Dorset (37) made any impact on the total.

In Dorset 's reply, Devon weren't helped by putting in possibly their most inconsistent fielding display over the past 3 seasons and Dorset eased their way past the 166 target. As in last year's competition, Devon would now have to reorganise themselves for a push through the remaining group games to qualify for the next stage of the competition.

A week later, Devon had their first home game of the season against their counterparts from Wiltshire. The return of Bob Eames, Julian Page, Mike Canning & John Goodwin would surely strengthen the batting and the fielding in general. Devon 's determination, drive and discipline were evident from the start. Julian Page (on debut) and Bob Eames both making half centuries but the star of the show was Bob Macey with another century (119) before being given out in the last over of the innings. Devon made their highest total in the competition for many years in totalling 278 for 3. Wiltshire would have to play out of their boots to gain a victory here. Two wickets in his first 2 overs from the impish Pete Rose put pay to any chance Wiltshire had of passing the required total, and they ended up on only 203 for 5. Devon giving easy runs in pursuit of more wickets, but a victory by 75 runs got Devon 's season well and truly back on track.

There followed wins in a tight game against Hampshire, in which a cavalier of an innings from Mike Canning turned the game, and then more comfortable wins against the Isle of Wight and Cornwall, with Eames, Macey and Cavendish all starting with the bat and Dave Smale, Stuart Lott, debutant Dave Amery and Bob Eames again all showing well with the ball. With skipper Chris Theedom, along with Richard Coe, Bob Macey, and several others putting on fine performances in the field, Devon seemed to be well prepared for their trip to the Channel Islands . And with Nigel Mountford behind the stumps, things could be turning in Devon 's favour for the remainder of the season.

However, due to unavailability and the fact of places being pre-booked on flights etc, Devon travelled to Guernsey without their strongest possible side and they duly paid the price. Although putting up a reasonably strong performance, little errors here and there proved to be costly as the Channel Islands passed Devon 's total with only 7 balls to spare.

In their final group game, Devon handed out a good old fashioned hiding to the "Cidermen" from Somerset , to at least give themselves an outside chance of getting through to the play-offs. Julian Page hitting his 2 nd championship 50 of his debut season in making 79 not out as Devon eased past the target of 160 set by Somerset with a massive 9 wickets in hand.

After what seemed like an age of deliberation (and many an hour on the telephone by our Captain), Devon made it through to the knock-out stages of the competition for the 3 rd successive year by the narrowest of margins. 0.001 in fact and Hampshire really must be kicking themselves for bowling extra balls in the contest at Seaton. However, the competitive side of the season was soon to end as Devon lost their first match in the knock-out stages against Wales at Creedy Park . Wales coming out victors by 33 runs.

The season eventually came to a close though the 2 nd weekend in September when Devon sent a side to play a "Harold Shaw Invitation XI" at Bovey Tracey. For those who don't know him (and there can't be many of those around), Harold Shaw is an amazing man and he was rewarded with a game of cricket that went right down to the very last ball. Harold's side coming out with the victory. The real winner that day though was Mr. Shaw. He was presented with a magnificent picture of the Bovey pavilion and was visibly touch. One thing about Harold that some people MAY not know, is that he now has (after the Minor Counties Final against Bedfordshire) 10 Minor Counties medals to his name since he took over the scoring of the Devon side nearly 12 years ago. This is a fantastic achievement in anybody's book and one that surely can not be equalled by another scorer in Minor Counties Cricket history. Long may Harold continue, he is an inspiration to many. Again, Bovey Tracey Cricket Club made the Over 50's very welcome over the course of the day and the Ladies yet again done the club proud with a veritable feast.

Among the notable achievements this season were Bob Macey's hundred against Wiltshire, Dave Amery's five wicket haul against Cornwall and "Slotty's" four catches in the game against the Isle of Wight at Instow.

Throughout the season, there were also some key performances in both the Championship and Friendly matches from several individuals, that gave the Devon hierarchy some timely reminders to build on next season. The addition to the squad of Julian Page, Jeremy Parr, Dave Amery etc have all been pluses, and if we could only find a couple of additions of the same calibre in the bowling department, I would fancy the chances of Devon mounting a genuine push for the title again next season.

Again the administrative side and the running of the team this year has yet again been outstanding. Dave Gambie should be congratulated in organising the fixtures and including some very entertaining and welcome "friendly" games along the way, These games gave the squad members who are pushing for places in the Championship side some great opportunities to show the selector's what they can do.

The umpire's that have officiated at our games this year also deserve our thanks, along with the officials of all the club's that have hosted our home games. Not forgetting the tea ladies as well. I'm sure that the tactics of the ladies at Sandford are to give the opposition so much food during the tea interval, that they are unable to move freely when the game resumes. It certainly works in the scorebox girls!

Finally, the two Captains that have carried the team through the season. Chris Theedom and Tom Stanton have both put in an awful lot of work throughout the summer and I'm sure that the whole side and it's supporters (of whom there are many), would like to pass on their thanks. And last but by no means least, Stan Newell. Stan's performance in running the draw that was held against Suffolk was nothing short of miraculous. Stan, everyone that's concerned with the side appreciates your support and help at each and all of the games. Long may it continue my friend.

Hopefully, the majority of the players and officials will be able to come along to the dinner later in the year. If the past few years' events are anything to go by, you really do not want to miss out. You never know, there may well be a few surprises during the evening to amuse us all.

And don't forget to keep an eye out for any "stars of the future". If you think that there may be any members of your home club's that would like to join the Over 50's, whether it be for the odd friendly game or in the Championship itself, then please pass their details on to us. We can never have TOO many players to choose from.

See you all in 2005 and remember to try and Stay Happy.