

**Devon Over 50s v Somerset Over 50s. @ Chagford CC – Sunday 19th June 2005**

Back on Track... After two defeats from their opening two games in the Cup Competition this summer, it was a side containing two changes, including a debutant in Nick Rogers that travelled to Chagford for the game against Somerset.!

Devon skipper Julian Page won the toss yet again and after due consideration opted to have first use of the Memorial Field track.!

Compared with their start against Dorset in the previous group match, openers Page and Shepherd were much more watchful in their approach to the visitors attack early on, but were still going at nearly 5 runs an over when in only the 9th over of the innings Page got caught in his crease and was bowled by Coombes. The total had reached 51 by then and for the 2nd time in two games, the Page / Shepherd combination had given Devon a decent enough start.!

Bob Macey looked increasingly comfortable until he too was deceived and was bowled to leave the total on 93 for the loss of two wickets. Pete Shepherd was then joined by the third left hander of the innings in Bob Eames and the pair set off to increase Devon's run tally and build an imposing total for the Cidemen to chase. The run rate was just gathering pace when Pete Shepherd started off looking for a single that was never really there and after being sent back by Eames was run out by a country mile. By then though, the pair had compiled a partnership of 76 in only 90 deliveries. Pete Shepherd had looked increasingly more likely to be the first centurion outside of the Eames / Macey twosome before his error in judgement, but his innings of 84 had given Devon the chance to set a reasonable total for their bowlers to defend.!

The only downside on the situation of the game at this stage was that any of the new batters going in didn't really have any chance of playing themselves in, but had to look to chase the runs almost from the start. This certainly proved the case as ex-skipper Chris Theedom tried to increase the chase for quick runs and was eventually bowled trying one hit too many after scoring 11 and was followed soon after by Richard Cavendish and Nick Rogers in successive deliveries to leave the total on 207 for 6 in the penultimate over.!

Bob Eames (51 not out) and Stuart Lott added a further 5 runs in the final over to leave Somerset needing 213 runs for victory in their allotment of 45 overs. After the start that the top 3 had given to the innings, it could have been said that this was not as many as Devon had expected to get, but nearly all of the batsmen said on their return to the pavilion that run scoring was very much harder than it looked as the ball was not coming on to the bat very quickly at all. But still, it was a damn sight improvement from the previous two batting displays this season and miracles don't happen over night.

Somerset put up a Fight... Things looked as though they would be tough going for the Devon attack as early as the 2nd ball of the Somerset reply when Dave Amery was smashed to the boundary by Dave Stephenson. But the South Devon medium pacer gained his revenge with the very next delivery when he got one to rise sharply and Stephenson could only manage to glove the ball in the air to present keeper Mountford with the simplest of catches. The way that Somerset approached their innings, it seemed that the road back to the Cider County was closing in an hours time as defensive and watchful shots were of a minimum. Dave Amery claimed his second victim of the afternoon when he crashed into Collins' stumps and when Richard Cavendish returned the ball to keeper Mountford and Somerset skipper was run out for 19, the visitors were left reeling on 43 for 3. The situation became far worse when Bob Eames, fresh from his half century in the Devon innings, took a wicket in each of his first two overs, one to a quite stunning catch by Chris Theedom at cover point and the other to a great piece of work behind the stumps by Nigel Mountford, and suddenly the total became 47 for 5 and a first Devon victory of the season looked very much on the cards

This was not the case though, as Somerset were not going to give the game up without one hell of a fight. Reeves, struggling with a muscle strain, was looking solid at one end and at the other, Steele started to play an increasing number of big shots. The pair of them added 65 runs in a little over 15 overs before Nick Rogers took his first Championship wicket for the side when he bowled Steele. The Hatherleigh all-rounder then took the second stunning catch of the innings when he clung on low down to dismiss Finan and when Reeves was also out to another good catch from Cornwood's Cavendish off the bowling of Dave Smale, Somerset were all but beaten on 142 for 9. Dave Amery returned to pick up his 4th wicket of the afternoon to end the visitors innings on 148 and hand Devon their first win of the season by 65 runs

There was still plenty of room for improvement in the performance, but then again there were also several plus points from the day. The batsmen all dug in and made starts till the end of the innings leaving wickets in hand to give the possibility of a run feast towards the final overs. Dave Amery claimed four wickets to see him to claim figures of 9 for 60 in his two Championship games to date that have been played at Chagford CC. The ground fielding was again good and very much an improvement on the Dorset game.

All is not lost but... The three catches taken by Theedom, Rogers and Cavendish were all of a very high standard and it must surely give the bowlers confidence to know that these chances will be taken when offered by the opposition batsmen. If the side can continue to improve then there is absolutely no reason what so ever why Devon Over 50's cannot be up challenging again in the near future. All is not lost for this summer, but it would take a strange series of results for Devon to progress in the competition this summer.

Next up is a very challenging game away to Hampshire. Both Somerset and Devon were very appreciative to host club Chagford for staging the game so expertly.

Man of the Match: Pete Shepherd (Bovey Tracey CC).