



ECB Yorkshire South Premier League

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Chairman's blog – 24 April

After the forecast of very cold weather, it was a welcome surprise on Saturday morning to find it mild and sunny. We had spent a couple of days away, the first at *Loftsome Bridge* coaching inn for Kirsty's birthday and the second with her family in Barnsley, and on Saturday we lunched at *Rob Royd's* in Worsbrough before driving across to Tickhill.

By the time we arrived at the ground, James Woolfenden's 92 had put Thornes in a strong position, but from 204-4 with over 10 overs to go, Thornes subsided to 234 all out – Usman Muzaffar taking 5-81 on his league debut for Tickhill. It was not the first time that my arrival at a ground has triggered a Thornes collapse – but this time their chairman Chris Froggett was either too polite or too dismayed to point that out.

New South African overseas player David White and skipper Ashley Fiddler got Tickhill off to a steady start, but the introduction of left arm spinner Steve Morgan (5-53) changed the picture. It was Jordan Lowe who kept Tickhill in the game, and whilst ever he was there, Tickhill seemed to have a chance. But after David Toft had him caught for 76, the innings fell away, and Thornes started their defence of the title with a 29 run win.

It was good to catch up with some of the Thornes players I had last seen in Abu Dhabi. They missed Akila Isanka and Greg Wadsworth in this game, but with the exception of Matt Varley, the squad is as last year. I also spoke to Ashley Fiddler towards the end of the game and, although disappointed that his side could not start with a what would have been a great win, I am sure that he was encouraged by their competitiveness against a team that will undoubtedly be challenging at the top of the league again. There was a decent crowd and the ground, with its excellent new facilities, looked really impressive. The pitch, although keeping a little low as might be expected in early season, caused no significant problems – as the scores bear out. I have absolutely no doubt that the club are a worthy addition to our league.



Steve Morgan in action at Tickhill



The pavilion at Tickhill

By the end of the game, the temperature had dropped significantly, and after a few days away we were ready to return home – so I apologised to umpires Adam Seymour and Simon Widdup and said I'd have a pint with them on a warmer day later in the season!

Elsewhere, in a day of generally high scoring, the finish of the day was at Aston Hall, where visitors Whitley Hall chased down 275 to win by two wickets with ten balls to spare. Two of last season's most successful players, Nic Smit and Neil Longhurst, were among the day's five century makers.

It was good to read in their report on this game that the umpires commended Aston

Hall's Tim Shaw, who, when fielding on the deep mid-wicket boundary, took a catch and then informed the umpires that his foot had been in contact with the boundary board at the time. Neither umpire could see this, and they wanted to acknowledge an excellent piece of sportsmanship.

League records were broken at Bawtry Road, where Sheffield Collegiate clocked up 417-3, with Australian opener Tom Rowley scoring 216 on debut. Collegiate certainly have a very impressive batting line up and will be hard to beat – but they must be hoping for better luck with the weather at Abbeydale this year!

Following conversations over the last couple of weeks with Jason Pitcher and Simon Widdup, I will soon be pulling together a small working group to look at how we, as a league, will respond to the law changes on discipline for the 2018 season. These will introduce yellow and red cards for the more serious disciplinary offences, and already some leagues have been experimenting with cards, fixed penalties and points systems. It is largely up to us what we do, and as I have said before, last year we were lucky with disciplinary issues – but we cannot be complacent and must be ready to move with the times. One thing I am very keen on is that we include a couple of senior players, as well as a couple of umpires, in our deliberations.

This week, I will be away for a few days seeing friends in London, and a family commitment on Saturday means that I will not be at a game. I do, however, intend to be at Hallam on Monday for their Rudgate Brewery cup-tie against Collegiate, where, no doubt I shall cop for the usual abuse from the visiting side's scorer. On Sunday I shall be watching the Rovers in action against Rochdale. The anticipated defeat in France last Monday was made up for with a good cup win at Leigh on Saturday, and thoroughly added to my enjoyment of the afternoon!

Till next week.

Roger