



## **SUSSEX SENIORS 50+ 1<sup>st</sup> XI – SEASON REVIEW 2025**

The Group 5 campaign for the Sussex 50+ 1<sup>st</sup> XI opened at Eastbourne with a home game against the 2024 National winners, Essex. The visitors, boasting a top four of England internationals batted first and on a difficult wicket scored 172 for 9 in their allotted 45 overs. Tim van Noort was the pick of the bowlers with 3-26.

With confidence, Sussex began their run chase but in a similar vein to Essex, struggled to gain momentum and indeed, at 123 for 9, the game was all but over in the favour of the champions. The rest will go down in folklore as Michael Murray (20\*) and number 11 Murray Barnett (26\*) took the game to the last ball of the innings, recording a 50-run partnership and scrambling over the line over to secure the first win of the season.

This victory set the tone for the season ahead and captain Jason Finch had installed a togetherness and ‘never say die’ attitude within the squad. With season long availability from newcomers Jason Oates, Imran Khan and van Noort, there was much to look forward to.

Match two was against a rejuvenated Hertfordshire. Our hosts elected to bat and after a couple of early wickets to Barnett, steadied their ship nicely but without ever taking the game away. Economic bowling and tight fielding were the order of the day for Sussex, and this resulted in restricting Hertfordshire to 176.

On a wicket that was starting to get lower-and-lower, it was a tough chase. Martin Barry had got Sussex off to a great start but following his dismissal, the Hertfordshire spinners took some control. Middle order contributions from Khan, Stratton, Finch and van Noort were enough however to seal a 4-wicket victory with 3 overs to spare.

With confidence growing, it was a good time to be playing 2024 national finalists Middlesex. Sussex were inserted on what was to be, a troublesome wicket. A score of 186 was on paper, a low score, but given the conditions, it felt competitive.

Khan opened the bowling and took 3 for 13 off his 9 overs. It was an excellent spell and ably supported by the ever-improving fielding of the Sussex boys. Harry Chetwood and Michael Murray took 2 wickets apiece as the visitors struggled to 134 all out of which England's Naseer Ahmed scored 65. It was an all-round team performance which was starting to become the basis of the campaign.

Surrey were our next visitors and despite putting on 48 for the first wicket, crumbled to 129 all out, with van Noort taking 3 wickets. The first 10 overs represented our worst period of the season but once that first wicket was taken, there was a reversion to type. However, at 5 for 2, we could ill afford complacency and a controlled 57 not out from Oates helped secure a 4-wicket victory which was both welcome but also a reminder that nothing could be taken for granted. At this stage, four victories from four was however, very impressive and Sussex were on a roll.

Berkshire has traditionally been a bogey side and therefore, it was nice to put them to the sword. A score of 288 for 4, dominated by a second wicket stand of 191 between Finch (95) and Oates (147) put the game (arguably) out of reach of Berkshire. So it proved. A 101-run victory was one of the highest winning margins for the Over 50's.

Buckinghamshire were propping up the table but there was a strong message not to be complacent. With five wins already under our belts, two more wins would guarantee a home draw in the knock-out stages. The early batters for Bucks performed well but were let down in the latter stages of the innings. A score of 207 was decent on a turning wicket at Hawridge & Cholesbury CC. Sussex spinners, Chetwood and Finch both took 4 wickets.

The Sussex response was mixed but held together perfectly by Cheg Abrahams who carried his bat for 76, ably support by Brad Smith as victory was sealed in the 40<sup>th</sup> over, for the loss of 4 wickets.

With three relatively comfortable victories on the trot, a close-run game against Kent was just what was required. Sussex batted first and contributions throughout saw a score of 219 posted.

The Kent response stuttered but they dug in and a late flurry of runs put them within a winning distance. A crucial wicket by van Noort in the 44<sup>th</sup> over with the score on 207 turned the game in the favour of Sussex. This was followed by a miserly over from Finch and an ultimate victory for Sussex by 9 runs. Jason Oates and Paul O'Sullivan both took 2 wickets.

The Group stage completed with an unprecedented 'seven from seven' victories. Whilst there were some outstanding individual performances (Jason Oates' 147 v Berkshire being the pick), it was the squad ethos that really shone through. There was a togetherness both on and off the field, led by Manager Ian Jones and Captain Jason Finch. The squad continues to include Andy Isaacs, Mike Edmunds and Paul Lindfield alongside all those mentioned in the review.

Finally, if there were one thing where Sussex stood head and shoulders above the rest of Group 5, it was in the field. In Over 50's cricket, this is massive but will be tested further in the upcoming knock-out stages.

*Written by Scott Stratton – 29<sup>th</sup> July 2025*