



SUSSEX CRICKET MATCH REPORT



Leicestershire v Sussex Specsavers County Championship Division Two The Fischer County Ground, Leicester, Friday 20th – Monday 23rd April 2018

Day One

There were half centuries for Luke Wright and Ben Brown on an absorbing first day of Sussex's Specsavers County Championship match against Leicestershire.

Wright bounced back from his first ball dismissal at Edgbaston last week in emphatic style.

The 33-year-old was solid in defence, industrious when running between the wickets and ruthless against the bad ball during an innings of 88, the 38th fifty of his first-class career.

Coming in at 53-2 with the Leicestershire bowlers on top, Wright first combined with Stiaan van Zyl in a 63-run fourth wicket partnership.

Van Zyl passed 10,000 career first-class runs during his innings. The South African had been made to work hard to reach 44 and was clearly frustrated when he was caught in the slips off left-arm spinner Callum Parkinson in the fiftieth over.

That brought Ben Brown to the crease and the captain had made 15 when Wright passed his fifty. The pair's fifty partnership came up soon after tea and their patience was rewarded as the runs began to flow more freely against Leicestershire's second string bowlers.

Just after Sussex had secured their first batting bonus point, Brown brought up his second fifty in as many innings.

The second new ball swung the momentum back in the home side's favour, however, with Brown caught in the slips off Mohammed Abbas for 64.

Five overs later, Wright also departed – 12 short of his century- as Ben Raine got one to nip back and sneak between bat and pad onto the off stump.

Ollie Robinson fell to the very next ball as he offered no stroke to a very similar delivery from the seamer and Wright and Brown's hard work looked like being undone.

Michael Burgess and nightwatchman, Ishant Sharma, were able to see out the remaining overs in the day and guide Sussex to the close on 254-7.

Having won the toss and elected to bat, Sussex endured a tough morning session earlier in the day.

Openers Luke Wells and Phil Salt received very few bad balls as they battled through the first hour.

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Wells faced 25 balls in scoring two runs, and had been hit on the helmet by Abbas before he edged Raine to wicket-keeper Lewis Hill.

If that was a straightforward take for Hill, the catch he took to dismiss Salt off Abbas in the following over was anything but, a thick edge flying towards first slip, but the wicketkeeper took it beautifully two-handed to his right.

In the final over before lunch Harry Finch drove at a Neil Dexter out-swing, failed to keep the ball down, and saw Colin Ackermann take a smart catch at gully.

Reflecting on his innings and the state of the game at the end of day one, Luke Wright said: “I was pretty nervous after getting a first-baller last week, against Warwickshire, so it was nice to get a few. We were in a bit of trouble at 52-3, and at 254-7 it’s pretty hard to say who has got the advantage – it’s probably honours even.

“Abbas is a good bowler, he’s always at the stumps and there’s a bit of swing both ways, so it was a case of trying to get through the early spells. Then they came back well with the new ball, Ben Raine always challenges you, but we stuck at it too.

“I felt in a little bit of a bubble, in a really good place – as though it was going to take a good ball to get me out, and in fairness Ben Raine bowled one! It would have been nice to have got a hundred here at the club where I started, but after last week I’d have taken 88.

“There was a little bit there for Parkinson, so hopefully as the game goes on and if the sun stays out there’ll be a bit there for Beery [Will Beer] too.”

Day Two

A fine century from Michael Burgess, the second of his career, helped Sussex to a formidable first innings score at the Fischer County Ground before Colin Ackermann, with an unbeaten half-century, led a spirited Leicestershire reply.

Burgess and Ishant Sharma compiled a partnership of 153 for Sussex’s eighth wicket, batting through the morning session without being parted.

Burgess, who began his career at Leicestershire, was first to his 50, twice hitting left-arm spinner Callum Parkinson over midwicket for six as he sought to accelerate the scoring rate.

India Test bowler Sharma was equally positive as he registered a maiden first-class half-century, leaving his previous career best score of 31 well behind.

Sharma, who has played 81 Tests and 80 one day internationals for his country, clearly relished his battle with Leicestershire’s own international bowler Mohammad Abbas. The Pakistan seamer was

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convinced he had Sharma leg before on 34, but other than that neither batsman gave a chance as the partnership passed three figures.

Sharma was finally dismissed for 66, attempting to loft off-spinner Ateeq Javid for a straight six, but failing to clear Gavin Griffiths at long-off.

Burgess had a fortunate escape on 98, pulling a delivery from Parkinson to midwicket, where Michael Carberry got both hands to the ball above his head but could not hold the chance. He went to his century off 146 balls, hitting five fours as well as the two maximums, before Sussex captain Ben Brown declared.

Buoyed by his success with the bat, Sharma then made an early breakthrough with the ball when he trapped Leicestershire opener Paul Horton leg before with a full delivery.

Carberry, defending with purpose and real determination, and the in-form Ackermann saw off the new ball, but Sharma returned to have Carberry adjudged leg before, half-forward to an in-swing.

Day Three

The Specsavers County Championship match between Sussex and Leicestershire at The Fischer County Ground looks to be heading towards a draw with the visitors reaching the close on day on 11-0 in their second innings.

Sussex's bowlers were never less than fully committed during their 96 overs in the field on Sunday, but a flat wicket and a fine knock of 186 from Colin Ackerman saw Leicestershire declare their first innings on 422-9, 16 runs short of Sussex's own effort.

Luke Wells bowled 27 overs of leg-spin – all of them today – and fully deserved first-class best figures of 4-81.

He broke a 131-run third wicket partnership when he caught Mark Cosgrove (66) off his own bowling to give Sussex their first wicket of the day shortly before lunch.

When David Wiese trapped Ateeq Javid in front for a stodgy 13 to leave Leicestershire four down and still 185 runs in arrears, Sussex would still have felt they had a chance to secure a significant first innings lead.

Ackerman and new man Neil Dexter steadily eroded the advantage over the next 22 overs, however, so that by the time Dexter was caught at the wicket by Ben Brown to give Wells his second wicket, Sussex's lead had been reduced to 110.

Lewis Hill was Wells' third victim – adjudged leg before after being deceived in the flight – before Ackerman and Ben Raine (40) put on 61 for the seventh wicket.

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When a visibly tired Ackerman – he'd been at the crease for nearly six hours in total – was finally caught by Harry Finch in the slips when attempting to sweep Wells an hour into the evening session, Leicestershire were just 32 runs behind.

That was Wells' fiftieth wicket in first-class cricket and gave him four victims in an innings for the first time.

At 406-7, a first innings lead for the home side looked likely, but it was testament to the persistence of Sussex's bowlers that they picked up two more wickets in quick succession to prompt the declaration with Sussex still in the lead.

The first of those went to Ishant Sharma when Raine was caught behind. That gave the Indian, who bowled 29 whole-hearted overs, his third wicket of the innings.

Will Beer was then rewarded for his efforts in plugging away for much of the afternoon when Callum Parkinson was also caught by Ben Brown.

A word for Ollie Robinson who beat the bat on plenty of occasions when pitching the ball up as well as causing a fair few problems when banging it in short. He was very unlucky to finish wicketless.

Wells and Phil Salt had a tricky six overs to navigate at the end of the day, doing so without any real alarm.

Reflecting on the day, Wells said: "It was nice to get a prolonged bowl today, not having bowled properly for a long time through knee injuries and so on, so after not getting runs in the first innings it was nice to go out there and contribute, and I feel like I'm pretty much back to 100% fitness.

"It's a rare sight to see two leg-spinners bowling in tandem, with myself and Will Beer, and I think we both enjoyed it.

"It's been strange in a way, because I was just sort of becoming a recognised bowler when I got injured and I haven't really bowled for 18 months to two years. I feel like it adds a different dimension to my game and hopefully it will help us win a few games down the road as well.

"There's something in the pitch with the new ball, but it's basically an attritional wicket, hard work for both batters and bowlers, in a way. What turn there is is out of the footholds, out of the rough, but once the ball goes soft it becomes very difficult to beat the bat."

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Day Four

After a career-best bowling performance on day three, Luke Wells scored an unbeaten century from the top of the order as Sussex batted out for a draw in their Specsavers County Championship match against Leicestershire at the Fischer County Ground on Monday.

After taking 70 minutes to add to his overnight score of seven during the morning session, Wells batted rather more fluently in the afternoon, the highlight of his innings a huge straight six off the bowling of left-arm spinner Callum Parkinson.

Leicestershire's bowlers stuck to their lines and lengths, but found little reward on a pitch that while dry, stubbornly refused to deteriorate.

An outstanding spell of nine overs from Mohammad Abbas had set the tone for a hard-fought morning's play.

The Pakistan international seamer swung and seamed the ball both ways, regularly beating the bat without taking the edge, though he did dismiss Sussex opener Phil Salt with an out-swing that knocked the off-stump out of the ground.

Once the new ball began to soften, however, batting became easier on the relatively lifeless pitch. Leicestershire did pick up another wicket in the session, Stiaan Van Zyl leg before wicket to a Gavin Griffiths in-swing for 24.

Two wickets also fell during the afternoon session, Harry Finch leg before half forward to seamer Ben Raine, before Luke Wright, having added 60 with Wells for the fourth wicket, was bowled by an Ateeq Javid delivery that turned inside his attempted drive through the offside.

Wells was joined by his captain Ben Brown (25*) before going to his hundred, the 18th of his first-class career, off 227 balls, having hit ten fours and two sixes.

Soon after Wells reached his landmark, the captain's shook hands and brought the match to an end with Sussex on 241-4.

The visitors take nine points from the match, to go with the twelve they secured at Warwickshire last week.

Looking back at the match as a whole, Sussex head coach, Jason Gillespie said: "It was hard-fought game played on what turned out to be a very good surface – it didn't quite misbehave as much as we thought it might at the back end of the game."

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“I thought we batted very well in both innings, against some very disciplined Leicestershire bowling. We ticked off some big partnerships, and Luke Wright, Ben Burgess and Luke Wells batted beautifully.

“But I also thought our disciplines in the field with the ball were fantastic, we bowled straight and attacked the stumps, and the fielders backed up the bowlers brilliantly.

“Wellsy’s hundred today was top drawer – he had to work very hard, it was a seriously challenging session this morning, Abbas bowled very, very well, but Luke stuck to his task and didn’t get flustered. You have to have that ability as a batsman, stay in the moment and focus on the next ball.”

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