



SUSSEX CRICKET MATCH REPORT



Kent v Sussex

Specsavers County Championship Division Two
The Spitfire Ground, St. Lawrence, Friday 11th – Sunday 13th May 2018

Day One

The momentum swung back and forth between Kent and Sussex on day one of their Specsavers County Championship fixture at Canterbury.

A brilliant fightback from Sussex's seamers in the afternoon session saw Kent slip from 125-2 to 215 all out. The visitors were then reduced to 21-4, before a counter-punching partnership from Luke Wright and Ben Brown took the side to 69-4 at the close.

After Sussex had exercised their right to field, Ollie Robinson made an early breakthrough when he bowled Daniel Bell-Drummond (13) in the sixth over of the day and David Wiese – playing his 100th first-class match - picked up Sean Dickson for 10 with the score on 50.

Heino Kuhn and Joe Denly made steady progress thereafter, putting on 75 runs together either side of lunch.

Half an hour after the break, Wiese sparked a Kent collapse with three wickets in twelve balls.

Denly was caught behind by Brown for 26, before Kuhn (60) suffered the same fate in his compatriot's next over. Adam Rouse then nicked an outswinger to Harry Finch.

Wiese's spell clearly inspired his fellow seamers as first Robinson found Zak Crawley's edge and then Ishant Sharma – who had been presented with his county cap ahead of the start of play – picked up two wickets in successive overs to leave Kent eight down with the score on 163.

Callum Haggett and Grant Stewart scored 31 each in contrasting fashion, before Robinson bowled Haggett and Sharma did the same to Stewart to end the innings.

When Sussex's reply got underway, the top order quickly discovered why Matt Henry is the division's leading wicket taker. After Harry Podmore removed Phil Salt in the second over, the New Zealander took three wickets with his next four overs to dismiss Luke Wells, Stiaan van Zyl and Harry Finch.

Wright and Brown resisted further loss in confident fashion, however, as they put on an unbeaten 48 for the fifth wicket.

Speaking at the close, Sussex head coach Jason Gillespie said: ““Losing four wickets at the end of the day wasn't ideal, but the opposition are allowed to bowl well too. I thought we were a little bit slow into our work at the start of the day.

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“It took us a little longer to get our lines and lengths right and we bowled well after lunch. David Wiese bowled really well, he was slow to get cracking and get the motor running, but when he did he was a real handful.

“The first hour tomorrow will be pretty crucial. We need ‘Browny’ and ‘Wrighty’ to develop this partnership for sure.”

Day Two

Neighbours Kent and Sussex exchanged blows in amongst the second-day showers in Canterbury where the hosts reached 125-4 to secure an edge at the mid-point of this engaging Specsavers County Championship clash.

No quarter was asked or given between these second and third-placed sides in division two as Kent battled away under floodlights to muster a 159-run lead on a pitch that continues to assist the seamer bowlers from both attacks.

When bad light stopped play soon after 5pm, Kent’s fifth-wicket partners Zak Crawley (23*) and Adam Rouse (10*) had contributed 31 to the cause in the face of a fiery, 2-26 bowling stint from Ishant Sharma.

Batting for a second time soon after 2pm on the second day, Kent lost Daniel Bell-Drummond 13 balls in when the opener fenced at a lifting leg-cutter from Ishant and was caught behind by Ben Brown.

The Indian paceman also accounted for Sean Dickson with another, near unplayable delivery, this time a shooting off-cutter that grubbed back into the right-hander and pegged back off stump.

Kuhn and his acting captain Joe Denly added 55 either side of tea but their third-wicket stand was broken after 11.5 overs when Ollie Robinson rushed one through bat and pad to win an appeal for a catch at the wicket and give Ben Brown his 18th Championship dismissal of the season.

Three balls after taking a blow on the right hand from South African compatriot David Wiese, Kuhn, when just three runs short of his second 50 of the match, nicked Wiese’s away swinger to Harry Finch at second slip.

Ollie Robinson, who bagged 3-51 in Kent’s first innings, believes the game is well poised. He said: “The overheads today have been more helpful for the bowlers with a bit of cloud around and the wicket has a bit of live grass in it, which always helps with a bit of nip.

“I feel both teams have bowled really well, but neither has batted particularly well. There’s a bit of rain forecast for Sunday morning so this could well end up being a bit of a shoot-out.

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“If we can chase 220 to 250 it should be quite a good game. It’s not a terrible wicket, but it’s keeping you honest because it’s doing something every now and then. Anything under 250 we’ll fancy our chances, any more than that, then it’s possibly in Kent’s favour.”

Earlier, Kent had secured a potentially precious 34-run first-innings lead after dismissing Sussex for 181 inside 44 overs.

Kiwi paceman Matt Henry was again the pick of the home attack, claiming 4-69 overall, as the hosts claimed one wicket during a rain-ruined first session of 11.4 overs.

Henry had Luke Wright caught at second slip 12 minutes into the second day, after which Kent returned following an early lunch to polish the job off – taking the last five Sussex wickets for 63 runs – despite losing seamer Grant Stewart from their attack with a recurrence of his hamstring injury.

Ben Brown and Michael Burgess eased the Sussex total into three figures in adding 40 for the sixth wicket but the partnership ended during a highly unusual double-wicket maiden soon after lunch.

Brown, on 30 and with his side still 97 in arrears, aimed to pull a good length delivery from Italian-born all-rounder Stewart, only to chop the ball onto his stumps. Stewart limped off three balls later with a hamstring niggle, leaving Ivan Thomas to bowl one delivery to complete the over. Robinson, the next man in, made a late decision to shoulder arms to a Thomas away swinger but succeeded in toe-ending a catch to keeper Adam Rouse.

The Sussex tail, led by Burgess and Wiese, continued to counter attack adding 40 in six overs. Henry gave way after bowling 10 overs either side of lunch and his replacement, Calum Haggett struck with his first delivery of the match having Wiese (28) caught in the gully off a sliced drive.

Burgess posted only the second half-century of the match from 67 balls and with eight fours but lost Danny Briggs soon after when the right-hander steered another from Haggett straight to gully. Burgess, on 54, finally perished as he looked to burgle some late runs. He holed out to cow corner to give Podmore a second scalp and Kent their modest lead.

Day Three

Sussex battled hard on another thrilling day at Canterbury but more inspired bowling from New Zealand overseas player Matt Henry saw Kent win this Specsavers County Championship encounter late on the third evening.

Having bowled Kent out for 235 on the stroke of lunch, Sussex required 270 to win in the fourth innings but despite a belligerent 47 from Luke Wright and a characteristically gutsy innings from the captain Ben Brown, the visitors fell 59 runs short.

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Sussex got the day off to an ideal start as Ishant Sharma's eleventh ball of the day saw Zak Crawley caught by David Wiese.

Two overs later, Phil Salt pulled off a blinding catch in the gully to get rid of Adam Rouse and give Ishant his fourth wicket of the innings.

When Ollie Robinson had Adam Rouse caught behind 17 balls later, Kent were 180 ahead with three wickets remaining and Sussex would have been eyeing up a chase of around 200.

A 53-ball 55 from Henry, however, swung the momentum back in Kent's favour as he and Harry Podmore put on 74 for the eighth wicket. It was a partnership that would prove crucial come the final reckoning.

Once Henry was finally dismissed - caught at first slip by Michael Burgess off Robinson – Sussex's seamers polished off the Kent tail reasonably quickly.

Robinson joined Ishant on four wickets when Grant Stewart was bowled for 11 before Ivan Thomas has his off stump knocked out of the ground by Wiese, the South African's second wicket of the innings.

Sussex lost two wickets early in the chase as Henry got rid of Salt and Luke Wells.

Stiaan van Zyl and Harry Finch added 43 for the third wicket before van Zyl feathered a Thomas delivery behind. Finch went for eleven two overs later when he was caught in the slips off Callum Haggett with 194 still required.

Brown and Wright saw Sussex through to tea without further loss before Wright went on the attack after the break.

He played some glorious strokes, finding the boundary on eight occasions – including an enormous hook for six - during his 58-ball stay at the crease.

Just as the veteran looked like he was going to win the game for Sussex, he was superbly caught and bowled by Haggett to add another twist.

Coming together at 158-5, Brown and Burgess took the runs required to below a hundred. The return of Henry to the attack swung the pendulum back towards the home side, however, when he bowled Burgess for 17.

Robinson was out lbw to one that kept low from Podmore five overs later, but whilst Brown was at the crease Sussex still had more than a fighting chance.

The Sussex skipper played with enormous character, tenaciously resisting Henry's brilliance, scrapping for singles and making sure he capitalised on any loose deliveries.

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But Brown eventually lost his battle with the division's runaway leading wicket taker when the New Zealander trapped him in front with the first ball after a lengthy interruption whilst the Rouse received treatment on an injured finger.

The loss of the captain signalled the end for Sussex, who lost their final three wickets for ten runs and fell to a first defeat of the season.

The home side take 20 points from the match, with Sussex heading home with three.

Speaking at the close, Sussex head coach Jason Gillespie gave his analysis of Henry's match-winning intervention with the bat: "We spoke earlier in the day about when lower order players come in and start playing big shots because we had a similar situation in our last game. On that occasion we changed our game and our plans and we paid for that.

"Coming into this game we reaffirmed that if a delivery is good enough for a top order player then it's certainly good enough for a tail-ender, so I thought we did well to stick to the game plan today.

"The opposition are allowed to play well after all, but with Henry today it was play and miss, play and miss, smack a four. He played with a positive mindset, chanced his arm and got away with it.

"That 74-run partnership [between Henry and Podmore] was vital when we've finally gone down by 58 runs overall. Yes, it's easy to point to Henry's knock as the reason, but if you look at the game overall we had opportunities where we could have been more effective with both bat and ball.

"We'll move on from here and learn important lessons. The sun will rise in the morning and we'll start preparing for the next block of white ball cricket."

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