



# SUSSEX CRICKET MATCH REPORT



Middlesex CCC vs Sussex CCC  
Specsavers County Championship – Division Two  
Lord's, London  
Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> – Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2019

## Day One

David Wiese's second five-wicket haul of the season gave Sussex the upper hand as they steamrolled Middlesex for 138 on the opening day of their Specsavers County Championship game at Lord's.

Wiese finished with figures of 5-26 from 15 overs - his best figures in first-class cricket for Sussex - as he ripped through Middlesex's middle order after the home side had opted to bat first.

The South African all-rounder was backed up by fellow seamers Ollie Robinson and Mir Hamza, who shared the rest of the wickets to skittle Middlesex in just 43.4 overs, with wicketkeeper Ben Brown also claiming five dismissals.

Sussex found batting far easier when they replied, with Phil Salt hitting a half-century and Stiaan Van Zyl undefeated on 46 as they advanced to 169-4, a lead of 31 runs.

Middlesex's decision to bat looked questionable from the start, with the visitors' pacemen finding plenty of movement in humid conditions.

Openers Sam Robson (18) and Max Holden (12) both survived edges that fell short of the slips before Robson became the first to depart, nudging an outswinger from Robinson into the keeper's gloves.

Nick Gubbins (2) soon followed, caught down the leg side off Hamza, before Wiese turned the screw, wrecking Middlesex's top order with consistent spells either side of the lunch interval.

Holden and John Simpson (4) perished to loose drives outside off stump, while both Dawid Malan (15) and Stevie Eskinazi (6) were caught behind fishing at good-length deliveries.

Toby Roland-Jones (14) lifted the Middlesex total into three figures with a couple of crisp cover drives to the boundary before becoming the fifth victim of the day for both Wiese and Brown.

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Robinson (3-50) then got in on the act, reducing the home side to 110-9 with lbw decisions to remove Ollie Rayner (0) and Ethan Bamber (5).

James Harris began to play with some freedom, launching Chris Jordan into the grandstand for six as he shared a last-wicket stand of 28 with Tim Murtagh.

But Hamza (2-35) finished off the innings by claiming the 300th wicket of his first-class career as he bowled Murtagh (10), leaving Harris unbeaten on 38.

Middlesex’s total represented their lowest first-innings score in red-ball cricket since they posted 98 against Worcestershire at the end of the 2015 season.

The visitors quickly set about wiping out the deficit, with Salt going for his shots and utilising the short boundary on the leg side as he raced towards a brisk 50.

Although they lost Luke Wells (7), leg before to Murtagh, Harry Finch helped Salt to reach 78-1 at tea – only 60 short of the modest Middlesex total.

The evergreen Murtagh gave his side fresh hope, pinning Finch (27) lbw in the first over after the break and then clean bowling Salt.

Laurie Evans, lbw to Harris for 31, was the only other wicket to fall before the close – but by then Sussex had already established a lead and they begin the second day as comfortable favourites.

Speaking at the close, Wiese said: “We didn’t feel that, in our previous game against Glamorgan, we hit our straps as a bowling unit and we spoke about being relentless and not giving anything away. That was the aim today – it wasn’t about trying to beat the bat or ping it in and out the whole time.

“It was about hitting the top of off stump and fortunately one or two went our way and we got a little burgle down leg, which always helps a bit. It was nice just to be consistent again.

“For me, I bowl my best when I keep it simple and I always feel the slightly older ball here is more consistent when it comes to swinging. I enjoy bowling with the new ball once in a while but I do feel my niche is just coming in first change when the ball’s slightly older and hitting that consistent line and length.

“Ollie Robinson’s a quality bowler and it’s nice to have him back. We missed him in the last two games, just having that impact with the new ball and we saw it

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again today – it’s fairly seldom that he doesn’t nip out one or two with that new ball.”

## Day Two

Stiaan van Zyl and Ben Brown's masterful centuries set Sussex on course for a maximum-points win over Middlesex on day two at Lord's.

The South African left-hander batted for just over seven and a half hours for his 173, while his captain Brown weighed in with 107 as Sussex, who bowled out the hosts for 138 on the opening day, piled up 481-9.

Middlesex, for whom James Harris returned figures of 4-98, survived four overs before stumps reaching 9-0, but they face the prospect of having to bat out almost all of the remaining two days to salvage a draw.

Sussex were only 31 ahead at start of play, but van Zyl and Brown showed great application to bat throughout an absorbing morning session against tight bowling from the hosts.

Van Zyl moved to his half-century before surviving a decent LBW shout from Toby Roland-Jones in what was a probing opening spell from the former England seamer.

Brown at this stage was completely becalmed and he got the benefit of the doubt on another LBW appeal when he'd made just 18, Ethan Bamber the unlucky bowler.

Just 83 runs came in that first session, but even so it meant Sussex were already over 100 in front.

The new-ball was available almost immediately on the resumption, but instead of bringing much-needed wickets for the hosts it was the signal for a furious assault from Brown who unfurled a series of glorious shots.

It set up a race between the two batsmen as to who could get to three figures first. In the event van Zyl just prevailed, reaching the landmark from 233 balls with 12 fours.

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Not long afterwards it was Brown's turn, 16 boundaries getting him to the century almost 100 balls quicker than his teammate. His second fifty came up in 41 balls in a passage of play which saw 81 runs in the 55 minutes after lunch.

It was 2:35pm by the time Middlesex got their first success of the day, Brown hitting across a straight one from Roland-Jones and losing his off-bail.

It was the Sussex wicketkeeper's third consecutive Championship century in as many innings and he now has 454 runs at an average of over 151 from his past four knocks.

Two more wickets fell before tea, David Wiese pulling a short one from James Harris to Roland-Jones in the deep, before Chris Jordan played on to give Bamber his first scalp of the innings.

Van Zyl though remained and any hopes of running through the tail were hindered by staunch support from Will Beer, who ensured maximum batting points were secured before tea.

The pair batted deep into the final session taking the eighth wicket stand to 89 before van Zyl epic vigil ended when he was trapped in front by Harris.

There was still time for Beer to make a maiden Championship 50 and equal his first-class best, before Harris struck for a fourth time to scatter Ollie Robinson's stumps, provoking Jason Gillespie's men to declare 343 to the good.

Speaking after recording a new personal best for Sussex, van Zyl said: "It's great to play here at Lord's first of all and to get some runs is a dream come true.

"I must say this hundred is up there as one of my best. I think my hundred on debut for South Africa is still No 1, but this one is second. It is such a great achievement and luckily for me it happened at such a wonderful ground.

"The wicket here is quite a tricky one, it keeps you honest. You are never quite 100% in as the odd ball does have something in it.

"So, for me and Brown (Ben Brown) to get that partnership going and get the team in a very good position was great.

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“I think tomorrow if we stick to our guns and bowl good areas, we’ll get the 10 wickets because there is enough in there. Even with the old ball there is plenty there.”

## Day Three

Sussex paceman Ollie Robinson left Middlesex facing the prospect of their heaviest County Championship defeat of the modern era after a rain-affected third day at Lord’s.

The right-arm seamer tore out the heart out of the home side’s top order with figures of 4-23, which included a burst of 3-8 in 14 balls.

When the weather closed in to provide temporary respite for the beleaguered Seaxes they were 61-4 still needing 282 to make Sussex bat again.

Perhaps more pertinently, Stuart Law’s side require a further 51 to better their loss by an innings and 232 runs to Sussex at Lord’s in 2005 – their worst defeat against a county side since before the outbreak of World War II.

Robinson, in his first match since injuring his shoulder against Durham back in April, had taken three wickets on the first day as the Lord’s tenants were hustled out for 138.

And in more seamer-friendly conditions he was close to unplayable second time around.

The 25-year-old and his new-ball partner Mir Hamza set Middlesex openers Max Holden and Sam Robson a searching examination in the morning gloom.

Both bowlers beat the bat a number of times and it was no surprise when Holden edged a ball leaving him a touch on the off-stump line to Luke Wells at fourth slip.

Holden will have been left doubly frustrated by the fact just four balls later, rain and bad light intervened for the first time, driving the players off for an early lunch.

The shortened first session meant Robinson had plenty of energy in reserve to take up where he left off upon the resumption and he did so to devastating effect.

Moving the ball both ways off the seam, he castled Robson (23) with one which trapped the former England man on the crease and bowled him through the gate.

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Home skipper Dawid Malan was then undone by one which went the other way, feathering the thinnest of edges to Chris Jordan at first slip.

And still worse was to come for Stuart Law's side when Stevie Eskinazi poked tentatively at another ball on a nagging off-stump line to give Luke Wells his second catch of the day.

Nick Gubbins and James Harris staved off any further disasters before the rain came again to prevent any further play.

When play was called off for the day, Robinson spoke to reporters and said: "Conditions definitely don't get much better for bowling and I had my tail up as well as I was hoping for a win today. It is great to play here, especially when conditions suit you as a bowler, it's awesome.

"Both Stiaan (Van Zyl) and Browny (Ben Brown) said last night there was a bit in the pitch and Browny went on the counter-attack in our innings for that reason. He said he felt he was threatened when he played normally, so he came out aggressively.

"I think it showed today when they batted, if you just sort of defend and don't look to score it is quite a hard pitch to bat on. All of their batters got out sort of prodding and not really going anywhere.

"After the way we bowled this morning we probably could have won the game today if there was no rain. So that is a bit frustrating, but hopefully we will come back tomorrow and get the win."

## Day Four

Ollie Robinson returned his best figures of the season as Sussex finally overcame dogged Middlesex resistance on the final day to triumph at Lord's by an innings and 50 runs.

Robinson finished with 7 for 98 as the home side eventually succumbed after spirited knocks from James Harris and John Simpson had taken the match into a final hour.

It was Robinson's second seven-wicket haul against Middlesex in as many seasons and ensured that he finished with match figures of 10 for 158 at the Home of Cricket.

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Harris (80 from 211 balls) and Simpson (76 from 154) both registered their highest scores of the season, combining gritty defiance with some classy strokeplay as they put together a partnership of 103 for the sixth wicket.

But Sussex, having failed to complete victories on the final day of their previous two County Championship games, stuck at it and forced the win – although they were forced to call on the services of coach Jason Gillespie as substitute fielder during the closing stages.

With Phil Salt and Laurie Evans both off the field injured, the former Australia international – who retired in 2008 – donned his whites to take up a position inside the boundary rope and witness Sussex's victory at close hand.

Resuming at 61-4 in the morning, Harris and Nick Gubbins helped to ensure that Middlesex would not be rolled over cheaply for a second time in the match as they compiled a stand of 58.

Gubbins (33) looked strong on the off side, forcing boundaries off Mir Hamza and David Wiese before the latter won an lbw decision against the Middlesex number three.

Harris and Simpson saw Middlesex through to lunch, but the all-rounder had a fortunate escape in the first over after the interval, fending off a Robinson bouncer that rolled on to the stumps but left the bails in place.

He appeared to be unfazed, however, progressing to his third Championship half-century of the season with a sweet cover drive off Robinson soon after lunch and continuing to find gaps in the field as Middlesex kept the scoreboard moving.

With dark clouds overhead, Sussex finally utilised the spin of Will Beer for the first time in the match and he gave Harris another scare with a close lbw shout that was turned down.

The partnership remained intact throughout the afternoon session, realising three figures when Hamza was recalled to take the new ball and saw it immediately dispatched to the boundary by Harris.

But the Pakistan seamer made the breakthrough with his first delivery after tea, finding the outside edge to end Harris's stay of almost four and a half hours.

Meanwhile, Simpson advanced to 50 before surviving a couple of close calls – an edge that Salt fumbled at second slip and then a leg before appeal by Wiese soon afterwards.

Robinson, having taken the first four wickets of the innings, belatedly completed his five-for by castling Toby Roland-Jones for a breezy 17.

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Ollie Rayner (28 no) announced his arrival at the crease with a string of boundaries, but Robinson struck again when he persuaded Simpson to fish outside off stump, with Chris Jordan taking an excellent catch in the slips.

Ethan Bamber (4) was then bowled to give Robinson the third seven-wicket haul of his first-class career and Hamza wrapped up proceedings by having last man Tim Murtagh (1) caught in the slips with 12.4 overs to spare.

Speaking from the balcony of the Lord's pavilion, Robinson gave his assessment of the match and his own performance: "We thought the pitch was going to carry on like it did last night, but it wasn't that way and it ended up being quite hard work. Luckily we pulled it out of the bag.

"Credit to Middlesex – they batted really well, especially James Harris, you can't fault him for his courage and the way he played was unbelievable. You would have thought at tea that Middlesex were going to get a draw, so it was good to get the win.

"It was special to get a seven-for today. I'd say as a unit, it was the best we've bowled for a long time. In the past, it's been one or two who have bowled well but in this game everyone who was asked to bowl did really well and that's what helped us to get the win in the end.

"We've got Gloucestershire at Arundel next week, so the lads will rest up and come hard again for that one."

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