



SUSSEX CRICKET MATCH REPORT



**Surrey vs Sussex Sharks
Vitality Blast – South Group
Kia Oval, London
Thursday 15th August**

Another sell-out Vitality Blast crowd of 25,000 at the Kia Oval saw Surrey shock south group leaders Sussex Sharks with a 26-run victory in an attritional contest.

It was the Sharks' first defeat of the campaign, in their ninth match, and followed a tied game between the two sides at Hove on July 26, but Surrey were superb in the field to record a third win by restricting Sussex to 137 for 8 in reply to their own 163 for 8.

South African leg spinner Imran Tahir was one of Surrey's bowling heroes, taking 3 for 24 from his four overs and fatally undermining Sussex's chase by dismissing Laurie Evans for 34 in the 13th over and then, after David Wiese had given the Sharks a final glimmer of hope with a straight six and four off Jordan Clark, having both Alex Carey and Delray Rawlins caught in the 17th over.

Tom Curran then removed Rashid Khan and Chris Jordan cheaply in the next over and, with 44 still needed from the last two overs, the game was up for Sussex. Wiese, in a last show of defiance, hit the penultimate ball of the match, from Sam Curran, for six to finish 31 not out.

Sam Curran, with a 24-ball 47, and Ollie Pope, whose more workmanlike 48 was his T20 best, top-scored for Surrey, with leg spinner Will Beer's 3 for 22 the outstanding bowling effort for the Sharks.

Sussex's chase began brightly, with Phil Salt and Luke Wright taking 30 from the first three overs before Salt, on 15, skied a pull at Tom Curran and keeper Ben Foakes took a swirling catch well.

Wright included three offside fours in his 25 from 21 balls, before he skied a return catch in seamer Clark's first over – the ninth of the innings – and, at halfway, Sussex were 70 for 2. But then their reply fell away dramatically as Tahir's three-wicket burst reduced them to 117 for 5 with overs fast running out.

Earlier, Curran junior hit three sixes and five fours in his explosive counter-attacking effort, which rallied Surrey after the early losses of openers Aaron Finch and Mark Stoneman. But, from the rest of Surrey's batting line-up, there were only another seven boundary hits, with the trio of Sharks spinners proving particularly hard to get away.

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Finch hit two fours, off Reece Topley and Wiese, before pulling the tenth ball of the match to mid wicket to go for 9. Stoneman was then run out for 1, failing to beat Luke Wright's throw to keeper Carey from wide mid on after Curran, who had hit the shot, sent him back instead of answering his partner's call for a second run.

Curran pulled both Topley and Wiese for sixes, and later swung Danny Briggs' left arm spin for another maximum, but there was also a nicely-timed square drive for four off Jordan and a deft guide to the third man ropes later in the same over. After the six-over powerplay, Surrey were 61 for 2.

Beer, though, struck with his third ball to end Curran's innings in the eighth over and then sent back both Foakes, who top-edged a sweep on 12, and Will Jacks, who gave a simple return catch off a leading edge to depart for just 1.

That left Surrey 98 for 5 and it was left to Pope to do his best to resuscitate the innings. He managed only two fours, from 44 balls faced before Jordan hit his off stump with a yorker, but he had at least kept the scoreboard ticking and two successive sixes over long off by Clark, in the 19th over, then boosted Surrey's total.

Clark perished for 15, skying to long off when attempting to hit Topley's left arm swingers for a third six in a row, and Tom Curran's useful 17-ball 23 ended in the final over when he swung and missed at Jordan. In the end, those late runs were crucial for Surrey.

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