

JONES SHOWS CLASS IN MIDDLETON CRICKET CLUB RUN FEST

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It was an early start on Sunday 30th April as Uppermill CC arrived at a resplendent looking ground at Towncroft. You only get to become one of the best grounds in Lancashire through sheer hard work and 6 months preparation from the Middleton groundsman had certainly paid off...

The wicket was in superb condition. Middleton Captain George Walker won the toss against his opposite number Andrew Jones and elected to bat first. Uppermill are a good team and in Ayaz Tasawar have a prolific batsman. Tasawar also plays for the Water and Power Development Authority alongside Lancashire T20 overseas star and former Austerlands paid man Junaid Khan. James Shaw an opening bat from Greenfield was another new face for Uppermill whilst it was also good to see Paul Thompson back from injury.

Andy Jones and Mark Lees opened the bowling for Uppermill and facing them were Middleton professional Chris Williams and Harry Gee. Chris following his excellent bowling display the previous day, soon got into his stride hitting the ball sweetly and finding the boundary on nine occasions. Chris appears to have settled in well at Middleton having been the paid man at Unsworth for several years before joining the Moonrakers this year. Harry Gee was not to be outdone by Chris and he too found the boundary on nine occasions. Uppermill finally made the breakthrough with Jim Baron bowling Williams for 67, followed quickly with the wickets of Walker and Gee for 70, leaving Middleton on 172-3. An excellent start from the Middleton openers, however nobody was prepared for the onslaught that was about to happen. Grant Jones was joined by Zain Tahir, both of whom had dug Middleton out of a precarious position the previous day, and the runs began to flow.....very quickly. Zain is a solid bat with a beautiful cover drive action and found the boundary on several occasions as he moved smoothly into double figures. He was however, also at close hand to watch his partner at the other end Grant Jones absolutely ripping apart the Uppermill bowling attack in a devastating display of batting. Hook shots, late cuts, drives on both sides of the wicket, boundaries back over the bowlers head, pulls and leg glances, Grant was giving a masterclass in the art of batting. He reached his century in only 80 balls, including 10 fours and 3 sixes. Andrew Jones and his bowlers who the previous day had bowled out Hollinwood simply had no answer to this batting masterclass. Grant remained unbeaten on 103, Zain on 40 and the total 305-3. Upon reaching his century Grant acknowledged his teammates in the pavilion and his father who was sat at the scoreboard corner. It was an awesome display for anyone watching and a privilege to witness it.

The Moonrakers Captain George Walker knew his team had set a tough target and struck an early blow with Pro Williams clean bowling Jim Baron. This however brought the Professional Ayaz Tasawar to the wicket and he built a steady partnership with Nathan Boote before Williams took his second wicket with Boote falling for 31. At the other end Mike Pritchard was bowling a tight line and length with little success. Paul Thompson joined Ayaz and they took Uppermill over 100 before skipper Walker decided to bring himself and talented youngster Tommy Rutter into the attack. This soon paid dividends with Walker getting the prize wicket of Tasawar LBW, who had batted very well for his 57. With the impending Wood Cup match against Micklehurst looming, Walker decided to look at all the options within his armoury. Steve McGuinness a spin bowler from the Greater Manchester Premier division was brought into the attack and he proved very effective taking 4-11. He will be a very useful asset to the team. At the other end, it was good to see Matt Foden back from University and into the groove with some quality spinners, no doubt his wicket-keeper brother Pete was well versed in the variety of balls that Matt had in his locker. Another youngster off the Middleton youth conveyor belt, Rhys Tierney got the opportunity to turn his arm to complement his ability as a very promising batsman. Eventually Uppermill only had 2 wickets remaining and a handful of overs left. It was left to Grant Jones, who else, to mop up the tail with a wicket and a run out, to cap a fine man of the match performance. The scorecard read -

Middleton batting

Williams bowled Baron 67

Gee caught Baron bowled Ayaz 70

Walker LBW Baron 0

Jones not out 103

Tahir not out 40

Middleton bowling figures

Williams 11 overs 1 maiden 2 wickets for 39

Pritchard 9, 4, 0 for 25

Rutter 5, 0, 0 for 33

Walker 8, 0, 1 for 32

Mcguiness 6,2, 4 for 11

Foden 4, 1, 0 for 10

Gee 2, 0, 1 for 9

Jones 1.4, 0, 1 for 3

Tierney 2, 0, 0 for 5

This Saturday at 1.30pm sees a historic moment in the history of Middleton Cricket Club as they enter the Wood Cup competition for the final time v Micklehurst. First competed for in 1921 Middleton have won this competition on 12 occasions. So get yourself down to Towncroft for an enjoyable afternoons cricket from eleven local lads doing the town proud.

Match report submitted by Philip Hamnett