

Middleton March on with Two Wins

Tuesday, 18 July 2017

Saturday brought Milnrow to Middleton and they will be joining the Moonrakers next year as they make the switch to the Lancashire League with their top professional Mohammed Saeed Anwar junior. Batting first, Middleton again relied on their professional Chris Williams to time his innings to perfection with a well crafted 51 including six fours.

Once again Chris provided a sound base for his teammates. This allowed others to open up and we had good contributions from Grant Jones with 25, Skipper Walker 12, James Tierney 19 and Zain Tahir 18. Middleton were also indebted to young Rhys Tierney who had a super knock of 28 including a couple of sixes and a superbly executed Dilscoop to the delight of the watching supporters. A Dilscoop is a reverse scoop of the ball over the wicket-keepers head for a four. Rhys was unfortunate that Middleton had reached the end of the overs with him looking extremely comfortable. At the end of the reduced 40 overs due to rain, Middleton were 177 for 7 wickets.

Milnrow were soon in trouble with Jones taking an excellent catch low down to dismiss Crabtree off the bowling of Williams. Fellow opener Steve Dryden was then bowled by Mike Pritchard for 8 leaving Milnrow in trouble at 29 for two.

This brought Milnrow Pro Mohammed Saeed Anwar to the wicket to try to stabilise the ship and this he did to some extent. However he too was to become another victim to the on fire Mike Pritchard who gave one of the finest bowling performances seen on Towncroft for some time. Bowling with fire and real pace this was an outstanding performance from Michael who had the Milnrow batters in all sorts of problems. With Chris Williams tying the batsmen down at the other end with his swing and movement off the pitch, Mike took them on from the Hollin Lane end.

He bowled three, had two LBW and had two caught to leave him with the fine figures of 11 overs, 2 maidens, 34 runs and 7 wickets. These 7 wickets took Mike over 50 wickets for the season and just reward for all his hard work and dedication. Milnrow were overwhelmed and eventually all out for 79 with Tom Rutter picking up the final wicket to fall.

Sunday saw Middleton take the short trip to Ashton under Lyne for the final visit to Rayner Lane before both teams transfer to different leagues next year. Middleton were warmly welcomed by the Ashton President David Mellor who thanked the Moonrakers for their friendly rivalry over the last 91 years and wished them well in the Lancashire League. He then watched as Middleton made a solid start with Pro Chris Williams once again providing a solid and classy start with a majestic 45 including 7 fours. Mellor was then rubbing his hands with delight as he saw the talented Middleton middle order dismissed for 9 runs, with Jones, Walker, and Tierney junior all back in the Pavilion. At 94-4 and then 105-5, Ashton sensed a major upset on the cards. Harry Gee had battled well for a solid score of 34 before falling victim to Said who together with Edirisingha were bowling well. This brought to the wicket Rhys Tierney and Zain Tahir with a rebuilding job to do.

Zain was accustomed to this role having performed it on several occasions this season already, meanwhile Rhys was looking to continue his good form from the previous day. With good defensive work, both batters took no risks and gradually got their eyes in. Ashton pro Edirisingha was getting some turn and making life difficult, however both batsmen began to get the occasional one or two runs. This soon turned into boundaries with Zain getting two fours. Rhys managed four fours and gradually a partnership of 70 runs had been built and completely turned around the complexion of the match.

Zain is an intelligent bat and found the gaps with ease, whilst Rhys continues to develop his game and improves all the time. When Rhys was eventually out on 48 the damage had been done to Ashton, and his partner Zain followed soon after, leaving Middleton on 198 for 9 off their allotted 50 overs.

Once again Middletons opening bowlers Williams and Pritchard were too tight and tidy to allow Ashton a free scoring start. Pritchard was to follow up his 7 wicket Saturday with 3 today giving him 10 for the weekend. All three were caught behinds with Pete Foden taking 2 and Grant Jones the other. Meanwhile Captain Walker brought himself on and claimed a couple clean bowled whilst utilising his spinners with Tahir and Jones getting to turn their arms. Both bowled well with Zain getting Matthew Hewitt the Ashton leading bat for 40 runs. Hewitt was the only one who really threatened the Middleton bowling. Zain ended up with 2 wickets whilst Grant Jones mopped up the tail with 3 very good wickets. This left

Ashton all out for 107 off 34 overs.

All in all a good weekend with three well earned victories.