

Middleton bid Werneth farewell

Thursday, 03 August 2017

After being rivals for 107 years Middleton bid a fond farewell to Werneth CC with a resounding victory at Towncroft on Saturday. Mind you it didn't always look that way with Middleton at one point struggling on 8 runs and 2 wickets down, with both the Professional and the Captain back in the pavilion.

Enter Grant Jones and Harry Gee who with a 120 run partnership turned the ship around and left Middleton in a commanding position. Both these players will be key components when Middleton take a step up to the Lancashire League next year. Werneth meanwhile will be moving East and joining the Greater Manchester Cricket League.

Both Jones and Gee realising the enormity and responsibility of the position they found themselves in, batted more conservatively than they normally would as they saw off the dangerous opening bowling pair Hodson and Pro Taylor. Their shot selection and placement was perfect as they offered zero chances and indeed treated spinners Abdul Sattar and Callum Porteous with the same respect. Meanwhile the scoreboard was ticking over nicely as the left handed Gee dovetailed nicely with the right handed Jones, each finding the boundary on seven occasions with Grant also hitting an enormous six. Werneth captain Andy Walker rotated his bowlers further, giving Torofday and Muzaffar a bowl and eventually bringing himself on in an attempt to break the partnership.

Eventually with the score on 126 Gee was caught attempting to push the score along and Jones was joined by the cultured bat Zain Tahir and they moved the score nicely to 150. With plenty of wickets in the shed and overs remaining Grant attempted to unselfishly move the score along. He attempted an enormous six over mid-off but was caught on the boundary by Werneth stalwart and all rounder Ian Dronsfield. There then followed a mini collapse as Rhys Tierney got the ball of the day, from Ali Muzaffar and Reece Jones was unfortunate when given out LBW as he looked well forward and the ball high.

Pete Foden was caught and so it was left to promoted 2nd teamers Mo Shahid and Danny Royle to steady the ship. This they did with a magnificent partnership of 40, running like whippets between the sticks. Mo was making an appearance replacing his lookalike, the unavailable Tom Rutter, and put in a great performance with 15 runs and 2 wickets to follow later in the Werneth innings. It was also good to see the talented Danny Royle striking the ball superbly for 21 and he was very unlucky to have been adjudged run out at the end.

The Werneth batsmen struggled from the off with Mike Pritchard following up his useful knock at the end of Middletons innings with the early wicket of Abdul Ghaffar adjudged LBW to an 80 mph straight ball. Professional Chris Williams then had talented opener Callum Porteous caught behind by Foden leaving Werneth pro Matt Taylor to lead a recovery of sorts. Taylor did stick around for quite some time scoring 34, however with both Williams and Pritchard firing on all cylinders the batsmen at the other end were slowly being dismissed as the pace duo took six wickets between them. With spinner Mo Shahid and medium pacer Harry Gee added to the attack and taking two wickets each, the Werneth team struggled to 69 all out and a comprehensive win for the Moonrakers.

Just as the first team were celebrating the second team were returning from Austerlands and a similar comprehensive victory for Middleton with the hosts being dismissed for 67, Mark Buckley took 5 wickets and Hughes and Harris got 2 apiece. A quickfire 39 from Leighton Le Carpentier and double figures from Hussain Shahid brought a quick finish. Similarly the 3rd team comprehensively beat Friarmere on the Sunday dismissing them for 104 with the pick of the bowlers Addison Holland with a superb 6-16. Also taking wickets were Stanley, Aikenhead, Brown and Collins. Again a superb 48 from Le Carpentier saw the Moonrakers home.

Phil Hamnett