



DIGITAL MATCH PROGRAMME



Kent Spitfires vs Birmingham Bears

Friday 27 August
Match starts at 19:00

VITALITY BLAST

The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence, Canterbury



www.kentcricket.co.uk

PRINCIPAL PARTNERS



ELITE PARTNERS

Barretts



WELCOME

By Matt Walker
Head Coach



Good evening everyone and welcome back to The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence in what is a much-anticipated match against tonight's visitors, Birmingham Bears.

I'd also like to extend a warm welcome to the Bears' players and staff, as well as the Warwickshire supporters that have made the trip to Canterbury for this match.

This Quarter Final is the fruit of what was an impressive group stage for us in this format this season. I've been particularly impressed with the manner of which we were able to win matches to get us here - no two victories were the same, and everyone in this team has made contributions to get us where we are.

Moments from this year's Vitality Blast will stick in the memory for a long time - Fred Klaassen's final over against Gloucestershire after Jack Leaning and Darren Stevens had produced a fantastic display of death over batting, Adam Milne's hat-trick here against Surrey, our team performance away at Glamorgan, and Jack and Jordan Cox's batting against Middlesex here were all extremely important to get us where we are.

I also can't look back on our run in this competition without mentioning how impressed I have been with our fielding -

stopping runs and taking catches, keeping pressure on batters is something that I've been especially impressed with.

Every player in this squad is proud to be a Kent Spitfire, and I think that's shown across the board this tournament.

Looking ahead to tonight, and I write this now knowing how electric an atmosphere The Spitfire Ground has on nights like these. The players feed off the atmosphere that I know you can create, and tonight you really can be that proverbial "12th man".

We should be proud of getting this far, but this objective now is to get to Edgbaston on 18 September and to challenge for the trophy. I know we have it within ourselves, and I have full confidence in the squad to get us to where we want to be.

We have been to Finals Day before, and we've lifted the trophy before. Having been involved in that squad, I can see many similarities in the talent we have here.

I hope you enjoy the game, get behind the lads, and hopefully leave The Spitfire Ground with another win.

Walks

SOUTH GROUP WINNERS

Kent have had some Vitality Blast heartache in recent years. In 2019 the Spitfires started well, winning six of their first seven matches, but fell off a cliff towards the back end of the season to find themselves fifth in the table and absent from the Quarter Finals.

In 2020, the team limped to a last eight tie away at Surrey, but were blown away by their oldest rivals and denied a spot at Finals Day.



So when the 2021 Vitality Blast began, fans were staying grounded. It was nice to have a break from what had been a more-than-tough start to the County Championship - which was unexpected - but few knew what to expect.

It would have been hard for Kent to pick a settled side with the likes of Zak Crawley and Sam Billings regularly away with England, and lead T20 spinner Imran Qayyum recently forced into an early retirement through injury. Who would keep? Who would finish? Who would be the spinner?

Former Yorkshire left-armers James Logan was snapped up on a short-term deal ahead of the tournament starting and was thrown in first game against Hampshire. Darren Stevens, now well into his 40s, was recalled to the Blast side for the first time in

years, and no overseas players were ready to feature for the club.

There were decisions to be made before the Hampshire match. But made they were, and the coaching staff stuck to their guns.

Jordan Cox would bat at six, Darren Stevens would be the all-rounder at number seven and Harry Podmore would be left out.

A 16-run win over Middlesex followed a neat 38-run victory against Hampshire, with the likes of Fred Klaassen, James Logan and Jack Leaning impressing early on.

A tense five-run win over Gloucestershire - majorly in thanks to an unbeaten 81 from Jack Leaning - made it three from three at 'fortress Canterbury' for Kent, showing progression as a team and allowing a debut for Afghanistan overseas star Qais Ahmad along the way.

Matt Walker's side then had to go away from home and were second best in mid-June when Somerset beat them by 47 runs at Taunton, but club captain Sam Billings impressed the next day against Glamorgan to help his team to a 40-run win in Wales to get things back on track.

Back at Canterbury, Kent were victorious in the latest episode of the 'Battle of the Bridge', seeing Essex off by 67 runs and registering their highest ever T20 score - 236/3 - in the process. Daniel Bell-Drummond backed up his impressive captaincy to date with a score of 88, and 69 from Zak Crawley and 42 from 17 balls from Jack Leaning didn't harm things. Leaning then took three wickets in a 'Player of the Match' performance on an electric night at the Spitfire Ground.

It was quickly becoming clear that Kent were the side to beat in the South Group, but celebrations were halted with an eight-

SOUTH GROUP WINNERS (CONTINUED)

wicket defeat away to Gloucestershire. But again, the Spitfires bounced back, and secured the double away at Essex after restricting their hosts to 31/4 from five overs, chasing 168 to win, before rain came. Just enough overs had been bowled and Kent were declared the victors on DLS and were back to winning ways.

An unbeaten Tom Banton century helped Somerset decimate Kent live on Sky in perhaps the Spitfires' toughest game of the season so far, as Somerset chased down Kent's 168 with more than four overs remaining without losing a wicket.

But Kent responded in a way only Kent can. A rain-affected abandonment away to Sussex came before an 11-run win over Surrey, capped off with an Adam Milne hat-trick after the New Zealand man returned to Kent an overseas replacement for Mohammed Amir. Jordan Cox's stunning 61 not out was almost in vain with Will Jacks flying during the chase, but Fred Klaassen dismissed the Surrey opener for 87 and Milne did the rest, picking up Ollie Pope, Kyle Jamieson and Laurie Evans off the last three balls of the game to see his side home.

It was the same result in the reverse fixture a week later at the Oval, when an impressive opening powerplay with the ball paved the way for Joe Denly, Daniel Bell-Drummond and Ollie Robison to knock off Surrey's 128/7 with ease and leave Kent on the verge of qualification for the quarterfinals.

That qualification was confirmed at Lord's when the Spitfires posted 157/8 before knocking over Middlesex for 80, despite being stretched for numbers with the majority of the first team in isolation after a COVID-19 outbreak in the camp.

Sussex defeated Kent by four wickets to end the Spitfires' group stage campaign with the first team still out, but top spot



in the South Group was confirmed by that point, thus ensuring a home quarterfinal.

And that brings us to Friday night. 2021 may have been a difficult season for Kent. They haven't won a red ball game and will find themselves in Division Three when the tournament gets back underway at the end of the month. Then they finished rock bottom of their group in the One Day Cup after having their squad dismantled by selection for the new Hundred competition; but the Blast is different.

It has brought relief and joy to Canterbury during what has otherwise been a tough year. The cheers when Darren Stevens comes into bowl or when Daniel Bell-Drummond and Zak Crawley go out to open are unmatched. Things are very unlikely to be too different on Friday.

Birmingham are not to be underestimated. They are in the quarterfinals on merit and will have their own plans for Finals Day.

Kent will be favourites, being at home and after topping their group. Again, hearts have been broken before, but they will want this year to be different - they will want to get the job done and get to Edgbaston.

The squad is another year older, another year more experienced, and very, very talented. Friday will be a good night - let's hope the players can make it a great one.

By Lewis Browning

OUR GROUP STAGE IN NUMBERS

PLAYING RECORD

Played: 14
Won: 9

Lost: 4
Abandoned: 1

Hampshire (H); Middlesex (H & A); Gloucestershire (H);
Glamorgan (A); Essex (H & A); Surrey (H & A)
Somerset (A & H); Gloucestershire (A); Sussex (H)
Sussex (A)

Highest Innings Total: 236-3 v Essex (Canterbury) (club record)
Highest Individual Innings: 88 D J Bell-Drummond v Essex (Canterbury)
Highest Partnership: 143 for 1st wkt D J Bell-Drummond & Z Crawley v Essex (Canterbury)
Best Bowling Analysis: M E Milnes 5-22 v Glamorgan (Cardiff)
Hat-Trick: A F Milne v Surrey (Canterbury)

BATTING AND FIELDING

	M	I	NO	Runs	HS	Aver	SR	100	50	Ct	St
J M Cox	11	9	4	300	64	60.00	135.74	-	2	11	2
Z Crawley	9	9	-	326	69	36.22	159.80	-	1	3	-
J A Leaning	11	10	2	287	81*	35.87	142.07	-	3	10	-
O G Robinson	4	4	1	103	48	34.33	139.18	-	-	3	-
D J Bell-Drummond	11	11	1	339	88	33.90	159.15	-	4	2	-
J L Denly	11	11	-	199	44	18.09	124.37	-	-	7	-
D I Stevens	11	8	2	94	28	15.56	132.39	-	-	-	-
A J Blake	9	8	2	64	19	10.99	140.34	-	-	10	-
G Stewart	8	6	3	30	15	10.00	130.43	-	-	-	-
M E Milnes	11	4	2	17	13*	8.50	212.50	-	-	4	-
Qais Ahmed	9	5	2	20	7	6.66	95.23	-	-	2	-

Also batted:-

3 matches: A F Milne 1

2 matches: S W Billings 14, 30 (ct1); H Z Finch 47, 30 (ct 2); E O Hooper 0*; H G Kuhn 42, 4 (ct 2); D J Lincoln 8, 10; J E G Logan did not bat (ct 1); C S MacLeod 31, 7 (ct 1); H G Munsey 10, 11 (ct 2); M K O'Riordan 2, 13* (ct 1); H W Podmore 0, 5; M R Quinn did not bat (ct 2); S M Sharif 5, 7*,

BOWLING

	O	Dots	Runs	Wkts	Aver	Best	4	Econ
H W Podmore	7	20	47	5	9.35	3/35	-	6.71
E O Hooper	8	20	47	4	11.75	3/24	-	5.87
J A Leaning	7	15	56	4	13.75	3/15	-	7.85
A F Milne	11	29	85	6	14.33	4/38	1	7.81
M K O'Riordan	8	17	42	3	14.00	2/24	-	5.25
M E Milnes	32	70	276	14	19.71	5/22	1	8.53
F J Klaassen	35	68	298	14	21.28	4/32	1	8.51
J L Denly	23.4	55	172	7	24.57	2/20	-	7.26
G Stewart	20.2	32	206	8	25.52	3/33	-	10.08
D I Stevens	26	33	236	9	26.22	3/32	-	9.07
Qais Ahmed	31	62	322	6	44.40	2/34	-	7.16

Also bowled:-

A J Blake 1-3-7-0; J E G Logan 4-7-19-2; M R Quinn 5.3-10-44-2; S M Sharif 5.1-14-26-2

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IN CONVERSATION WITH... FRED KLAASSEN

How excited are you to play in another Quarter Final for the Spitfires?

I'm very excited, especially considering it's a home one - played in front of our beloved Kent supporters. I hope we can rectify last year's result, and go one step closer to Finals Day, with the obvious aim winning the tournament.

You have played a lot of high pressure white-ball cricket for the Netherlands. That must stand you in good stead to face the Bears?

What player doesn't want to be part of any type of finals in any tournament? My experience with the Dutch has always put me in good stead regards to competitive cricket.

Birmingham will be tough opponents, as they too have had a good season to get to the Quarter Finals, it should be a feisty showdown.

You featured in The Hundred; has being exposed to such a condensed pool of talented cricketers helped your game and thus your preparation for tonight?

I haven't had much experience playing against players in the North group, and The Hundred gave me a chance to not only play against some of these guys, but also with them as well.

Sam Hain who features tonight for the Birmingham Bears was my team mate, I made sure I analysed him every net session, and studied his weaknesses first hand throughout.

You're our joint top wicket-taker in the Blast this year with Matt Milnes (14 wickets). Do you thrive under the pressure of being a strike bowler?

The great thing about our bowling attack is that we work so well as a team. 'Milnesy' and I are obviously proud to be the leading wicket takers, but couldn't have done it without the rest of the gang.



Grant Stewart, Darren Stevens, Joe Denly, Jack Leaning and James Logan have all bowled beautifully.

Throw into the mix the world class of Adam Milne and Qais Ahmed, you've got a pretty potent attack in my honest opinion.

You missed the last two Blast group games because you were in isolation. Do you have a message for the players who came into the team and beat Middlesex to secure a home QF?

That performance from a somewhat 'thrown together' squad was remarkable.

I'm quite familiar with the Scottish players, so knew the quality they were bringing, so too to the rest of the squad that played (I'm a huge fan of Elliot Hooper's left arm tweekers). But it was amazing how well they played together.

Captained by England superstar Zak Crawley, the result wasn't that surprising under that tactical mastermind.

They all know they did the Club very proud, and have set us up beautifully for a home quarterfinal in front of the Kent faithful.



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T20 THRILLS & SPILLS



So the long wait is over, Kent host the Bears in the Vitality Blast quarter final with a place at Finals Day at Edgbaston up for grabs. With 4,000 allowed back into Canterbury it should feel more like “normal” after a Summer restricted to 1,500 supporters. It promises to define our season given we failed to make the top six in the Championship...

When the T20 format was first launched in 2003 fans didn't really know what to expect. Would it be a hit and giggle sideshow or something more significant? I doubt anyone quite expected it to spawn the IPL or the Big Bash! Kent played just five group games winning two. Surrey triumphed at Trent Bridge in the first ever Finals Day and the format was an immediate hit with crowds.

The early years gave the impression that Kent didn't really take the competition

seriously, traditionally the Championship was the focus and in 2005 they only won one game and came bottom of the qualifying group. That attitude began to change in 2006, they qualified in third spot to make the last eight but were trounced by the champions to be Leicestershire, by nine wickets at Grace Road.

Edgbaston 2007 remains my favourite ever Kent memory. Kent came second in the group and then thrashed Nottinghamshire by nine wickets at Trent Bridge to make Finals Day for the first time.

Gloucestershire beat Lancashire in the first game and then Kent faced Sussex in the second semi-final. Sussex were dismissed for a modest 140 with 2 balls remaining. Goodwin top scored on 38, but in a solid team effort Tredwell 2-25, Stevens 1-13 and Malinga 3-30 made Kent favourites. However, the pitch was not an easy one to

T20 THRILLS & SPILLS (CONTINUED)

score on and Kent only made it home with four balls to spare by five wickets. Rob Key was the star with a calm and calculated 68*, after a good start with Denly (31), Kent wobbled on 118/5 but he saw us through to the final. Even the Kent Spitfire won the mascot race! The omens were good.

The final was a low scoring classic. It ebbed and flowed, the capacity crowd captivated. Kent restricted Gloucestershire to 146/8 (Marshall 65), notable to an incredible hat-trick by man of the match Ryan McLaren (3-22). Malinga was carted for 44 off his 4 overs, but the rest of the bowling attack kept it nice and tight, Arafat 2-13 and Cook 1-16 doing a job.

The chase was nervy. Each time Kent looked set, Gloucestershire chipped away with another wicket. Walker with 45 looked to anchor the chase. Key was controversially “caught” by Marshall for 18 and the intensity cranked up a notch. Stevens was crucial at the end with 30*, but an odd Gloucestershire decision to bowl young Carl Greenage at the death backfired. Nerves got the better of him in the final over whereby Kent needed 13 to win and then six from three. Stevens smashed the ball for four and then celebrated as it was a no ball. Carnage ensued both on and off the pitch. I shed a tear. On a humid, emotional evening we celebrated with an ice-cream and huge grins all round.

The following year we were back at Finals Day, this time at the Rose Bowl. Kent had snuck through in third spot and then hammered Warwickshire by 42 runs at Edgbaston. In their semi-final against rivals Essex, Kent made a decent 173/7, Denly top scored with 36 whilst Bopara took 3-36. The Essex reply looked well set at 78/0 but once Pettini had gone for 54 they collapsed somewhat and finished on 159-8, 14 runs short. Arafat took 2-22, but it was a team effort.

The final was another classic but higher scoring against Middlesex. Kent lost by three runs off the last ball. It was heart-breaking. If they stole the 2007 final, in 2008 Middlesex did likewise. Middlesex made 187/6 with Shah staring with 75 (including 5x6's). Arafat with 2-20 was again on the money.

The reply was well on track at 89/0, Key made 52, but it fell to Kemp to try to score three off the final ball to earn a tie and win on fewer wickets lost. Unfortunately he failed to connect sufficiently and was run out by Henderson. Middlesex then qualified for the Champions League in Antigua! To add insult to injury, the Rose Bowl was a pathetic shambles that evening. Fans had to find shuttle buses in the dark, missing the trophy presentation to literally run for transport to make the last train back to London which was rammed with sweaty Kent, Essex and Middlesex fans. I have sworn never to return to the venue.

2009 was the last time Kent qualified for the Finals Day, this time back at Edgbaston. Kent won their group and demolished Durham at Canterbury in the last eight. Unfortunately despite a Stevens 77 they lost to Somerset by seven wickets with seven balls to spare. Sussex thrashed Somerset in the final by 63 runs by skittling them for 109.

Since that trio of trips to Finals Day Kent have lost four quarterfinals. In 2011 they lost away to Leicestershire by three wickets who went on to be champions again. In 2015 they won the group but then tied at home to Lancashire but lost on fewer wickets lost. The chaps from Old Trafford returned to haunt us again in 2018 where they won by six wickets in a low scoring game. Last year we lost at the Oval by 56 runs. Can Kent make it fifth time lucky? We shall see!

By Eddie Allcorn



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ALFIE'S ARMY



Alfie is 5 years of age and has in his short life so far not only had to grow up dealing with being diagnosed with Mosaic Downs syndrome as a toddler but was also dealt a blow at the age of 3 when he was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia, which is a blood cancer, on 1 May 2019.

Alfie and the family have literally been to Hell and back since then. He's had to have Chemotherapy Via lumbar puncture and more recently in October 2020 had a portacath installed in his chest & a feed directly into his heart to allow the Chemotherapy feed the heart directly. His parents have had to endure having to administer his chemo themselves and then watch as he suffers afterwards due to the effects. He is still undergoing chemotherapy until at least September 2022 to help keep the Leukaemia at bay.

His parents, Jenny and Andy set up "Alfie's Army" whilst going through this ordeal and are a group of the families friends who do various fundraising events to raise money and awareness for Clic Sargent, who are a fantastic child's cancer charity solely funded by donations.

All contributions go towards the support work of Clic Sargent and everyday 12 families are told their child has cancer. Clic Sargent is the only organisation to offer

all round care and support. Something which both Jenny and Andy have been so grateful for and are determined to give back so they can help other families like theirs. They have so far raised a whopping £13,000 though their activities including a Peak district challenge where they hiked 53km in one day.

This season, Whitstable Cricket Club Colts teamed up with Alfies Army to try and help wherever they can with the fundraising and Awareness and so far have managed to contribute near enough £1400 from events including a sponsored Marathon run by U15 player Jack Tremain, fundraising BBQs and donating match fees from all the colts cup matches this year. There will also be an auction/Quiz night later in the year where various donated items will be up for grabs including a fantastic signed Kent Bat, Joe Denly items and other great stuff.

Alfie has been coming to Whitstable's Saturday morning Softball sessions this year, getting involved and has been guest of honour for a first XI match in which he won the toss for our skipper Sam Denly, something that has been a rarity on a Saturday lunchtime from our first XI.

If you want to help Alfie's Army and Clic Sargent please head to their Just Giving page at: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/andrew-bills>



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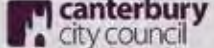
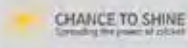
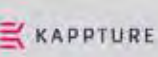
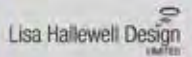
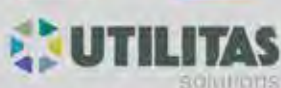
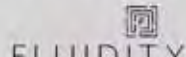
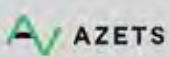
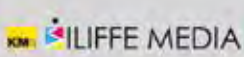
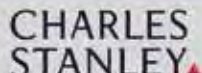
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