



DIGITAL MATCH PROGRAMME



# Kent Spitfires vs Hampshire Hawks

Wednesday 9 June 2021

Match starts at 19:00

VITALITY BLAST

The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence, Canterbury



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# WELCOME

By Matt Walker  
Head Coach



I hope that you, your friends and families continue to stay safe and are well. Today marks a change of format for us as we get underway in the Vitality Blast, and I know the players share your excitement about the tournament this year. I'd like to extend a warm welcome to the players and support staff of today's visitors, Hampshire Hawks.

Although 2020 was a difficult season for many reasons, I think the lads should be proud of their performances in T20 cricket last year. Batters like 'DBD' and Zak seemed to make such a difficult skill look so easy by scoring quick runs against some really talented bowlers, and Fred Klaassen grew into his role as a death bowler to lead the line with the ball. I was also really pleased that we continued something that has become a Kent trademark over the last few seasons - we were one of the best sides in the field, with some fantastic individual pieces of skill, run outs and stops - all of these skills help win you matches.

It's fantastic that we can start this year's tournament in front of a live crowd again - and with 1,500 of you now backing us inside The Spitfire Ground, I know the squad will love having your support once more in this format.

We're lucky to have such squad depth in this format, and having seen some of the lads play for our Second XI in this format over the past couple of weeks, everyone is hungry to be in our playing XI on every matchday. I'm looking forward to an exciting few weeks with the white ball and I know the players are too.

Enjoy the match

Walks

# TEAMS IN BRIEF: KENT SPITFIRES VS. HAMPSHIRE HAWKS



## KENT SPITFIRES

**Coach:** Matt Walker

**Captain:** Sam Billings

**Last Year's Performance:** Quarter-finalists

**2020 Leading Runscorer:**

Daniel Bell-Drummond (423 @ 42.3)

**2020 Leading Wicket Taker:** Fred Klaassen  
(13 @ 28.76)

**Overseas players:** Adam Milne (From 28 June), Qais Ahmed (Afghanistan – whole tournament)

**Key man:** Joe Denly – One of the most experienced quality white-ball batters on the county circuit, the 2018 Vitality Blast MVP can punish any team in the tournament with his batting and his underrated leg spin.

**Flies under the radar:** Jack Leaning – The third-highest scorer last time out, he took four for 16 in a second XI warm-up against Essex and after a tough start seems to be improving with every week.

**Best Player Under 24:** Ollie Robinson – Hopes are high for Tawanda Muyeye, but Robinson has been the brightest spark on and off the field so far, embracing the chance to open in red ball cricket.



## HAMPSHIRE HAWKS

**Coach:** Adi Birrell

**Captain:** James Vince

**Last Year's Performance:** Bottom  
(South Group)

**Leading Runscorer:** James Fuller  
(205 @ 34.16)

**2020 Leading Wicket Taker:** Mason Crane  
(9 @ 22.00)

**Overseas players:** D'Arcy Short (Australia); Colin de Grandhomme (New Zealand)

**Key man:** James Vince – After helping Sydney Sixers win the Australian Big Bash, the Hawks skipper will be desperate to repeat that success on home soil.

**Flies under the radar:** Ian Holland – The American-born, Australian all-rounder has been in fine form with the bat in the LV = Insurance County Championship and is a decent but unheralded seam bowler.

**Best player under 24:** Tom Prest – The hugely exciting 18-year-old batsman could be given the chance to transfer his prolific 2nd XI form – where he scored a triple century last month – to the Blast.



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## A CHANGE OF PACE... CONTENDERS?



It would be fair to say that thus far the season hasn't quite panned out as hoped for in the Championship. A couple iffy batting collapses, a truly dreadful injury list largely afflicting the bowlers and inclement weather when we have actually been on top in games has made for a frustratingly winless run. The Northants game could have boiled up nicely had we not lost a day or had the visitors actually wanted to win after our positive declaration.

We now change formats for the Vitality Blast and hopefully so too will our fortunes. That said with Crawley and Billings probably missing chunks of the group stages due to England calls and the news the Amir cannot play for us, we will need everyone to chip in.

On paper Kent still have some genuine talent perfectly suited for T20, but they will need to perform. Denly and Bell-Drummond can be blisteringly effective openers, taking a game away from the opposition from the off. Alex Blake on his day can pulverize the bowling and smash the ball into next week.

Of the rest, Ollie Robinson was in fine fettle against Northants and Leaning will be expected to contribute with both bat and ball. Milne is expected to join for the second half of the group stages meaning the likes of Stewart and Klaassen will shoulder trying to keep down the run rate.

Star of the show could be new overseas signing Afghan Qais Ahmad, having performed in other T20 competitions and become a bit of a cult player in

the Australian Big Bash with Hobart, expectations will be high for him weaving a bit of magic with his spin bowling.

There will be great opportunities for younger players, perhaps Tawanda Muyeye or Gilchrist will catch the eye plus hopefully the likes of Kuhn and Podmore will be fit and available to return too. It has to be said though, that much of the chat at the Northants game amongst the members was whether an ageless legend by the name of Darren Stevens might get a game...

I was privileged to witness his stunning 190 vs Glamorgan (15x 6's, 15x 4's) and then against Northants he picked up a cheeky five more wickets. Perhaps not quite "one for the future" but if form is temporary and class is permanent, you need to pick a class player in brilliant form!

Sadly in these Covid ravaged days it won't be the normal bear-pit vs Hampshire at Canterbury on Wednesday, 1,500 rather than 6,500 in attendance will change the vibe, but it will be another positive step towards getting back to the yearned for "normality" that none of us will take for granted ever again. I'd also urge anyone that can no longer attend to let the Club know so that your seat can be reallocated and another Kent fan hungry to see live cricket is able to do so.

Will they see a competitive team? Yes. Will it be a successful campaign though? T20 is a strange animal, on any single day one player can win you a match almost single handed. We will miss Billings and Crawley at times, so it will have to be more of a team effort. Confidence and momentum are key in the short form. Perhaps it will be the oldest swinger in town, a certain Mr Stevens that lights the blue touchpaper on Wednesday. We all sincerely hope so! Come on Super Kent!

By Eddie Allcorn





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