



DIGITAL MATCH PROGRAMME



## Kent Spitfires vs Sussex Sharks

Sunday 18 July

Match starts at 18:30

VITALITY BLAST

The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence, Canterbury



[www.kentcricket.co.uk](http://www.kentcricket.co.uk)

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# WELCOME

By Matt Walker  
Head Coach



Good evening everyone and welcome back to The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence for our final group match of this year's Vitality Blast. I'd also like to welcome the players and staff from our opponents tonight, Sussex Sharks.

What a couple of weeks this has been! The Pandemic has thrown up many, many challenges for our sport but our Championship match against tonight's opponents was certainly the biggest challenge that we have faced here at Kent as a result of COVID.

Everyone at the Club did extremely well, working above and beyond to source and register a side for Canterbury Cricket Week, and I'd like to thank everyone involved with getting us out there playing this past week.

The players that came in played for the White Horse and did so with distinction - it was a great result given the circumstances, and I'd

like to echo Jonathan Rice's sentiments on the Club website that we owe them a lot for coming in at such short notice and playing the way they did.

We may have already qualified for the Vitality Blast Quarter Finals, but winning breeds confidence and that is still our objective going into this game. I know, as always, you will be supporting this squad - it may not be the squad that defeated Surrey twice in a week, but these lads are certainly relishing the opportunity to be Kent Spitfires.

The support you showed them in the Championship match was exemplary, and I know this will continue tonight.

Enjoy the match

Walks

# LAST TIME OUT



**Elliot Hooper enjoyed a dream debut as Kent routed Middlesex for their lowest ever Vitality Blast score of 80 at Lord's.**

Thee 25-year-old left-armer, one of seven debutants for the visitors because of a COVID-19 outbreak, took 3-24 in the 77-run victory – the hosts failing to reach their previous worst tally of 92 made against Surrey at Lord's eight years ago.

Fellow Spitfires T20 debutants Matt Quinn, Safyaan Sharif and Marcus O'Riordan were also among the wickets, all this after Harry Finch top scored with 47 and Heino Kuhn made 42 in Kent's total of 157-8, Blake Cullen taking 4-33.

Another of the Kent new boys, George Munsey, swept the second ball of the match from Mujeeb Ur Rahman for six but departed later in the first over.

Kuhn was then dropped at point by Joe Cracknell from Tom Helm's first ball and he and skipper Zak Crawley set about the host's attack.

Crawley hit three sixes as 50 came up in the sixth over, but attempting a fourth he was brilliantly caught by Max Holden at deep square – the first of Cullen's four victims.

Kuhn and Harry Finch continued the onslaught helped by a succession of mis-fields, adding 65 in 43 balls, meaning the

visitors were sitting pretty at 118-2 early in the 13th over.

However, Kuhn holing out in the deep off the excellent Sowter sparked a turning point as runs dried up and wickets tumbled. Finch tried to hold things together making hitting six fours, in his 35-ball stay but just 40 runs came from the last eight overs.

Chasing 158 to win, the hosts simply fell to pieces.

Sam Robson was yorked by Quinn and when the dangerous Joe Cracknell pulled Podmore straight into the hands of deep square they were 16/2.

And it was 20/3 when New Zealand international Daryl Mitchell was trapped LBW by Sharif, who returned two for 10.

Hooper trapped Middlesex debutant Varun Chopra in front before Podmore (2-12) returned to have John Simpson caught at short mid-on.

Holden was caught on the fence to give O'Riordan his first Blast wicket and the procession continued as Hooper scattered Sowter's stumps.

Helm, Hooper's other victim, and Mujeeb were the only players other than Chopra to reach double figures as the hosts were bowled out with 21 balls to spare.

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# AN 'EXTRAORDINARY MATCH'



**The COVID Pandemic has created many odd cricketing situations, but – so far – none has been quite as odd as the start of the match at Canterbury, beginning on 11 July 2021, when Kent took on Sussex in the 169th Canterbury Cricket Week.**

The story began the afternoon before, when one of the squad which had just played, and duly thrashed, Surrey in the Vitality Blast, tested positive for the virus. This meant that the entire squad, who had all been part of one bubble, had to self-isolate, and therefore were not available for selection for the next day's game.

An evening and much of the night on the telephone then ensued, as Messrs. Downton, Walker and Storey tried to assemble eleven fit men to play the next morning, and, what was just as tricky, to register the squad as Kent players. Of the eleven who turned out on the Sunday, five were Kent professionals already (Kuhn, Podmore, O'Riordan, Qadri and Gilchrist) one was on loan, Quinn, and the other five were more than surprised to be called up (Gordon, Finch, Lincoln, Houillon and Singh).

Heino Kuhn was given the captaincy of this scratch eleven, and not just because he is nine years older than any of his new teammates, five of whom were born this Century. He duly won the toss and put Sussex into bat.

The Kent squad in some ways took us back to the golden era of Canterbury Week, when amateurs would come out to play and the professionals would have to sit out a couple of games.

For professionals a Century ago, read 'COVID-victims' today. I'm not sure whether the new faces will play for Kent again, but they will always be able to say they are county cricketers.

The five Kent debutants; four playing their first ever first-class game and one a 'refugee' from Sussex, were soon joined by another, when Nathan Gilchrist had to drop out after one day's play, having been 'pinged' by his NHS app.

This brought in our sixth debutant, and fifth new first-class cricketer, Bailey Wightman, a U.K. born Aussie to complete the side. According to Andrew Samson, the TMS statistician, no county has ever introduced as many as five players new to first-class cricket in one match, always excluding a county's first ever first-class games.

Among the bowlers, Jas Singh took five wickets in the match (4-51 and 1-32) and as the youngest member of the team, not yet 19, did his future career chances no harm at all. Among the batsmen, Harry Finch, formerly of Sussex, was the star, making 24 and 115.

Regardless of their individual statistics, all Kent supporters owe a debt of gratitude to these men for turning out for the Club and saving not only our cricketing faces but also Canterbury Week as well.

I hope they all prove good enough to get many more chances in the future.

By Jonathan Rice, Kent Cricket Heritage Trust Chairman



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# FIRST RESERVES...

The global pandemic continues to impact upon sport as well as every other aspect of our lives and that came into sharper focus last week when in the space of just a few days my football team Gillingham FC were forced to cancel ten days-worth of pre-season friendlies. Then the One Day international for which I had tickets at Lord's saw the main England white ball squad isolating necessitating a scramble to assemble a brand new team from scratch to face Pakistan and then of course Kent were pushed into self-isolation due to "contact" at the Oval plunging Cricket Week into peril.

The county did well to assemble a replacement squad to avoid a cancellation, Joe Gordon, Harry Houillon, Dan Lincoln and Jas Singh being joined by ex-Sussex player Harry Finch. Kuhn was made captain and they were thrown into the challenge of first class cricket together.

I missed the first day, I was on my way to Wembley for THAT Final. However, I kept an eye on the score and 69-6 I did fear Kent might get a bit of a thrashing. That they recovered to a modest but respectable 165 was highly creditable, but to bowl out Sussex for 181 for a lead of just 16 thanks in part to 4-51 by Singh meant the game was live. The loss of most of day 2 meant the visitors needed to get a move on in day 3 but they meandered rather at three an over against a bowling attack now shorn of Gilchrist with another debutant thrown into the mix Bailey Wightman.

The openers put on 209 and the gap in class was revealed for the first time but the scratch Kent XI stuck gamely to their task. Sussex closed the day on 277-3 and you felt they needed to get a move on to give themselves enough time to bowl us out.

Explaining the pride and thrill of that final day to a non-cricket fan would sound bonkers. Sussex added 55 more to set

Kent a notional 349 to win from 86 overs. An overly conservative declaration was the general consensus in our part of The Spitfire Ground, and so it proved.

With no realistic hope of winning the game, Kent set about saving it. Little of real consequence rested on the outcome, both sides would be in Division Three for the final four Championship fixtures, but professional pride and sporting competition came to the fore. You play for four days and celebrate a draw? Too right! At 0-1 it looked a tall order, but then O'Riordan (47) and Finch batted calmly and with authority adding 120. Sussex needed eight further wickets in 55 overs and the pitch had flattened out. Could they save the day?

Kuhn went cheaply but Lincoln joined Finch in another gritty and determined rearguard action. When Lincoln was finally prised out for a stubborn 41 an increasingly grumpy Sussex sensed a belated opportunity and their appealing reached a crescendo. Finch withstood the pressure to complete a hundred on debut before Hunt got him on 115. Qadri followed in the same over, exposing an inexperienced tail to the new ball but Podmore 36\* and a gallant 0\* by Wightman secured a tense but unexpectedly deserved draw.

The Covid protocols remain though meaning a scratch team for Kent's last two Blast games at Lord's vs Middlesex and then at Canterbury vs Sussex where ideally in normal circumstances they would win at least one and secure a home semi-final. The best laid plans can turn up in a trice thanks to a "ping" on a phone app. People's health and welfare must always come first but it does mean for some unexpected twists and turn in the cricketing summer of 2021. Come on Super Kent!

By Eddie Allcorn



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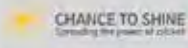
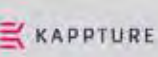
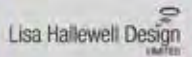
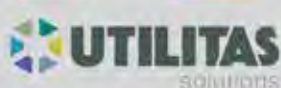
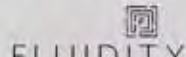
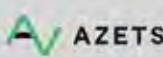
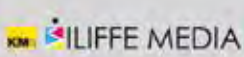
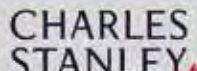
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