



DIGITAL MATCH PROGRAMME



Kent Spitfires vs Essex Eagles

Sunday 20 June 2021

Match starts at 14:30

VITALITY BLAST

The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence, Canterbury



www.kentcricket.co.uk

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WELCOME

By Matt Walker
Head Coach



Good afternoon everyone – I hope you and those closest to you are keeping safe and well. I'd also like to welcome the players and staff of the Essex Eagles back to Canterbury ahead of what I'm sure will be another exciting rivalry encounter between our two sides.

I've been really pleased with our start to this year in the Vitality Blast, and despite a hiccup against Somerset, winning four out of our first five games is a great platform for us to build upon as we go deeper into this tournament. The team showed great spirit to come back from defeat at Taunton the next day to overcome Glamorgan in tough batting conditions, and it shows the mental strength of this side.

I'd like to congratulate Matt Milnes on his first T20 five-wicket haul against Glamorgan on Wednesday. He dismissed some top-class batters on his way to 5-22, and we're all really happy with the progress that 'Milnesy'

has shown in this format in such a short period. Fred Klaassen, too, has really kicked on with his bowling, and his nine wickets at 16.55 so far is proof of his development.

The Eagles present a huge challenge for us – they have won this competition in very recent history, and always come into this match with that little bit extra – something that we will also bring. Rivalries like this are what makes T20 cricket what it is; the atmosphere and the drama condensed inside a total of 40-overs is always amplified in matches like this.

If you're joining us tonight, I know you'll be backing the lads all the way, as you've done so so brilliantly in our home matches so far.

Enjoy the match.

Walks

LAST TIME OUT

Kent seamer Matt Milnes took his maiden five-wicket haul in T20 cricket as his side sealed a 40-run Vitality Blast win over Glamorgan in Cardiff.

Milnes & co. did the business to defend a total of 144 for seven, with the former Nottinghamshire bowler ending the match with figures of five for 22.

Two wickets each for Marnus Labuschagne, Prem Sisodiya and Dan Douthwaite put Glamorgan in control, but they were dismissed for just 104 as Labuschagne failed for the first time in the Blast.

Kent won the toss and chose to bat which thrust Zak Crawley straight into action. He was off the mark from the first ball of the innings, but his opening partner Daniel Bell-Drummond was immediately trapped lbw by Sisodiya without scoring.

Sisodiya should have had a second when Joe Denly spooned the ball to mid-off. It was the simplest of catches for James Weighell who somehow dropped it. Weighell made amends in the next over by dismissing Denly who again lobbed a catch in the air.

It brought Sam Billings to the crease with Crawley. Both men struggled to get going and Crawley went to the first ball of the seventh over, caught by Douthwaite off Sisodiya for 15 from 16 balls with just one four.

After a slow start Billings smashed Andrew Salter for two straight sixes. Both cleared Kiran Carlson who would have had a better chance of a catch had he been on the rope. Labuschagne had Jack Leaning caught behind.

Billings followed him when he was bowled by Douthwaite leaving his team 77 for five.

Needing impetus, Kent were indebted to veteran Darren Stevens who hit Weighell



for four and six from consecutive balls before he was caught by Nick Selman on the cover boundary.

David Lloyd fell early in Glamorgan's reply to Milnes bringing Labuschagne – on the back of three straight Blast fifties – to the crease.

Selman went in the fifth over to a smart boundary catch by Crawley as Glamorgan reached just 33 for two from their first six overs.

It soon got worse when Labuschagne was caught and bowled by Milnes for 22 and Colin Ingram followed in the same fashion for 17. It left Glamorgan needing 86 from the final 10 overs.

They didn't get close with Carlson caught behind off Denly and the tail subsided to Milnes from there. Kent now have four wins from five Blast games.

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THE BATTLE OF THE BRIDGE



According to Charles Kightly from English Heritage, the rivalry between teams representing Kent and Essex began in a gruesome manner in 1776. “Two teams from Kent and Essex agreed to play a ‘great match at cricket’ at Tilbury Fort, Essex.

“But when the Kentish team turned out to include a man ‘who should not have been there’ – perhaps a ‘professional’ – the Essex men refused to play, ‘on which a very bloody battle ensued’. Facing an obligation to forfeit, one of the Kentish team ran into the guard house, seized a gun, and shot dead an Essex man.

“Everybody now rushed to grab guns, easily overpowering the four soldiers on duty, and ‘fell to it, doing a great deal of mischief’. This included running someone through with a bayonet, and killing a guard as he attempted to restore order.

“Eventually the Essex men fled over the drawbridge, while the Kentish team ‘made off in their boats, but search is making after them’.”

Whilst, of course, more recent clashes with Essex have been thankfully nowhere near as violent, intense rivalry has endured between these noisy neighbours.

Since the inception of T20 cricket in 2003, the Spitfires and Eagles have faced each other 34 times, with Kent winning 18 and Essex 15.

The Spitfires’ highest T20 total against Essex came at Chelmsford, when Joe Denly and Daniel Bell-Drummond set a new Club record partnership for any wicket in T20 competition – putting on 207 runs together, Denly scoring a century and Bell-Drummond 80*, with Kent making 221/2 in 20 overs.

Kent’s most decisive victory by runs in T20 cricket came against the Eagles at Beckenham in 2008 – 91 from Joe Denly helped the Spitfires post 204/5, before dismissing Essex for 123 – a win by 81 runs. James Tredwell took 3-17, and current Kent bowling coach Simon Cook 3-21.

Essex’s 99 all-out in 2007 is the fifth-lowest total by any side facing the Spitfires in the format, Darren Stevens taking his current T20-best figures of 4-14 in a 42-run victory at Chelmsford.

‘The Battle of the Bridge’ also forms part of the annual contest of the Mike Denness Shield between the two counties, named after the former England cricketing legend that has played for both sides. The Men’s First XI with most aggregate victories across all formats wins the Shield.

Kent are the current holders of the Mike Denness Shield, having won two of three matches against Essex in 2020.

Steve Watts



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RIVALS



Cricket is not really meant to be truly tribal. You clap good shots by the opposition, you applaud their hundreds, acknowledge their bowling and fielding, “good cricket” is just that, but I have to admit I sometimes struggle to stick to those ancient ‘Corinthian’ ideals... Particularly when we are playing Surrey and Essex, but especially Essex!

The opening game of the Euros saw Italy For me I think it all goes back to a B&H Cup Semi-Final in 1983 at Canterbury. As a kid growing up in the ‘80s, I missed the Kent glory years of the ‘70s, and that was my first big semi-final occasion. A heaving 10,000 crowd and I legged it down Nackington Road from the Simon Langton after school to witness the Essex reply. Unfortunately, Kent could only muster 128 all out off 51 overs. Essex hardly raced to knock off the runs, taking a painstaking 46 overs, it was pure torture. I remember the blood curdling roar when talisman Gooch went for 18 but that was it. A crushing loss by nine wickets meant for one grumpy 15 year old, Essex mentally got filed under “I really, really hope they lose” from then on.

In the subsequent years Essex have won many more trophies than Kent, which really hurts. Their fans are numerous and passionate and vocal. That hurts. Kent

people look down on Essex, the butt of many jokes and sneers which I am sure are equally reciprocated!

When Kent have demolished Essex over the years, it has brought unconfined joy to most Kent fans, but unfortunately on the day I most wanted us to win it didn’t exactly go to plan. Lord’s 2008, the Final of the Friend’s Provident Trophy. Lord’s packed out and humming. The Kent hordes chasing that elusive Lord’s Final win. We were to be dashed again. Kent laboured to 214 all out off 50, McLaren’s 63 at least giving the bowlers something to defend. Robbie Joseph bowled manfully (3-40) but Essex kept their composure to win by five wickets, albeit with just seven balls remaining on a blisteringly hot day. In a quirk of fate I was gifted van Jaarsveld’s match shirt from that day and promised to wear it until we won a Lord’s final. It had long since fallen apart and we still haven’t ended the Lord’s hoodoo!

My personal moment of redemption came in a T20 game at Chelmsford in 2017. The place was jammed, hostile, noisy, belligerent, one eyed. Silence when we took a wicket or scored a boundary except for the odd cluster of Kent fans willing to brave the Coliseum. Joe Denly made a sensational 127, Bell-Drummond 81* and Kent mustered 221-2! Even the Essex fans gave Joe a standing ovation! They then set about chasing the total down, Chopra made 116 but we held on to win a mind-boggling classic by eleven runs! I stood up amongst the stunned locals and roared my cathartic approval!

We all have our memories of Essex games, not all good, they have certainly provided more than their fair share of pantomime villains over the years! From Gooch and Fletcher to Irani and Bopara they have become the county Kent fans love to beat. Now of course it is the “Battle of the Bridge” – whoever wins gets to keep the tolls, the losers get the traffic jams! All a bit of fun really. Well that’s what I try to tell myself anyway!

Eddie Allcorn

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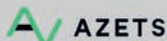
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