



DIGITAL MATCH PROGRAMME



Kent Spitfires vs Gloucestershire

Sunday 13 June 2021

Match starts at 18:30

VITALITY BLAST

The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence, Canterbury



www.kentcricket.co.uk

PRINCIPAL PARTNERS



Barretts



ELITE PARTNERS

WELCOME

By Matt Walker
Head Coach



Good evening everyone and once again, if you're joining us tonight, welcome back to The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence. Today 's opponents, Gloucestershire, are a huge challenge for us and I'd like to welcome their players and support staff to Canterbury.

After a tricky start to our red-ball season, I'm extremely pleased that we've been able to win our first two matches of this year's Vitality Blast. There have been so many good performances to name them all, but I must give a special mention to Jack Leaning and Jordan Cox after their performances on Friday night. They set a new Club record T20 partnership for our fifth wicket, after both coming to the middle in a tough and high pressure situation. To then anchor an innings and push on to take us up past 175 was impressive.

I'm pleased to welcome Qais Ahmad into our ranks for tonight's match. He's an explosive performer of high quality, and I'd like to personally welcome him as a Kent Spitfire. He has gone through extraordinary lengths to join us with various COVID regulations and I think that's a measure of him as person as well as a player.

I'd also once more like to thank you for the incredible support we've experienced in our first two matches, and hope that tonight's atmosphere stays at the high level that you have all set yourselves!

Enjoy the match.

Walks

LAST TIME OUT



A brilliantly-measured partnership between Jordan Cox and Jack Leaning steered Kent Spitfires to a 16-run win over Middlesex in their Vitality Blast match at Canterbury.

The hosts were wobbling on 47 for four before Cox and Leaning both made 64, helping them recover to 178 for eight, despite a hat-trick for Chris Green, who took five for 32.

Luke Hollman countered with a high-class 51 off 33 balls, but the visitors lost wickets too frequently to seriously threaten the hosts and finished on 162 for eight.

Middlesex's decision to field after winning the toss initially seemed vindicated when Blake Cullen took wickets with the last two balls of the third over, after he'd been hit for 13 off the previous four by Daniel Bell-Drummond, before the Kent skipper skied the fifth and was caught by Eoin Morgan at mid-off for 15.

Joe Denly slashed at the next ball and fell to a diving catch by John Simpson for 10 and in the next over Ollie Robison edged Steven Finn and was caught behind for eight, leaving Kent on a modest 42 for three at the end of the powerplay.

Green had Alex Blake stumped off a wide for six, but Cox and Leaning responded with a cleverly-paced stand of 123, marked by smart running between the wickets and a well-timed acceleration that saw the last five overs produce 64 runs.

Green's final over saw Cox caught by Max Holden, a two, a six and then a hat-trick. Leaning was caught by Morgan, Stevens stumped off his first delivery and Milnes caught by Bamber.

Middlesex's reply got off to a disastrous start. Stevie Eskinazi was caught behind off Denly for four and Paul Stirling skied James Logan's first delivery to Blake for a duck. Holden got a bottom edge to Stevens and was caught behind for 10, Simpson played a horrible shot to Leaning and was caught by Cox for four and Eoin Morgan cut Stevens to Bell-Drummond and was out for 27.

Stevens then bowled Green for 16 and although Nathan Sowter offered some late resistance with an unbeaten 31, when Fred Klaassen had Hollman caught by Blake off the final ball of the penultimate over, it left Middlesex needing 25 off six, a task that finally proved beyond them when Cullen holed out to Milnes and was caught by Blake for 4.

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STEVE WATTS ON BEING 'THE VOICE OF KENT CRICKET'



Donkey's years ago, I mean it was so long ago I don't think 'Stevo' had made his first-class debut, I worked in radio. I started out covering Kent for BBC Radio Kent as a freelancer. In many ways, I've done a full lap of the track, and come full circle.

10 years ago Kent played a 40-over match on TV. The ECB arrived with all their posh sound kit and I was asked if I would be interested in covering some games in the T20 Blast as it was known then that were shown live on Sky. It's just progressed from there, to now doing England Internationals, Test matches and Vitality Blast Finals Day, which is just the best fun anyone could ever have! It's a long day, but it's a great day, and I'm paid to be there! Some people are just fortunate I guess.

I'll be honest...lockdown was very tough. But plenty of people had it worse than I did. Just being at home all the time was so boring. When it snowed in February I sat in my local High Street on a bench in a pile of slush drinking a coffee. I just couldn't bear to be indoors any longer.

What lockdown did give us was The Spitfire Sessions. It was an absolute pleasure to host those catching up with some people I did know and plenty of people from the past I'd never met. I'm convinced Asif Iqbal thinks he could still turn out in the Blast and lift the trophy as captain of the Kent Spitfires. He could well be right!

It was great fun working on the Live Stream of Blast matches last season too. David Fulton was an absolute pleasure to work with. I'm very pleased to see him back

providing commentary again this year for those that can't be with us at The Spitfire Ground St Lawrence. However nothing beats a live crowd. You just cannot replicate that atmosphere. If you heard the fake crowd noise on the football last season you will know exactly what I mean!

It's a bit of a buzz to announce a player reaching 50 or 100 or Darren Stevens coming onto bowl and getting a huge cheer from a crowd. We may only have small numbers, but you wouldn't know it from the noise so far in the two Blast matches we've had here. The best thing is just seeing people out enjoying themselves at live sport.

If I had to name a favourite Kent player, it would probably be Aravinda da Silva. Just that one season for Kent in the mid-90s but my, what an impact! Of the current squad, and I really don't want to massage this ego any more, I would have to say 'Stevo'. To be as good as ever at 45 is just incredible. If it were all to end tomorrow, what service he has given to Kent and to the game as a whole. That said I love the opening partnership between 'DBD' and Joe. There's nothing finer than a Joe Denly Cover Drive. Especially when he holds that pose! Wow that's sexy! Questions will be asked in Parliament if I don't mention Blakey! Because, well, he lives not too far from me.

I see absolutely no reason why Kent can't do exceptionally well in this year's Vitality Blast. They played some fantastic T20 cricket during the last two seasons, and there are some exciting players who we have yet to see pull on a Kent shirt this season. And just how many bowling options does DBD as the current captain have at his disposal?

We may only be two games in but Kent Spitfires have started brilliantly in this year's Blast. Two very different victories. And just about every single player has chipped in with a vital contribution.

Steve Watts



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DECISIONS, DECISIONS...



Like the vast majority of Kent fans, I'm also a passionate football fan, and 2021 has belatedly brought the usual bi-annual dilemma. With the Vitality Blast in June and early July, it now clashes directly with the delayed Euro 2020. I always think cricket has to be both self-aware and a little bit cute with their scheduling when it comes to the World Cup and Euros.

The opening game of the Euros saw Italy playing Turkey, something that would usually have me feeling like a kid on Christmas Eve. However, a direct clash with Kent Spitfires vs. Middlesex saw me opt for live cricket and miss an opening game of a tournament for the first time since getting the football bug in 1978. For the record, Italy romped to a 3-0 win, but so too did Kent, by 16 runs. You wait 23 months for a win at Canterbury and a second arrives two days later!

Once again Kent were put in and at 54/4 after eight overs needed a bit of a rebuilding job which was precisely what Leaning and Cox did. Initially they ticked the score over without taking unnecessary risks. 114/4 after 15 overs gave them a proper platform and then they walloped 56 off four. Bizarrely they both fell for 64 in the final over to Green who took four wickets including a hat-trick to end on a par score of 178/8.

The Kent fans lapped it up, there were a few wags in the crowd and they were on top

form! One shouted at Cullen fielding on the boundary "why have you got your IQ on the back of your shirt?" – he turned revealing the number 19 and we all sniggered. In other news, the chap in front of me had a nightmare with his mini sausage rolls, he fumbled one and in trying to catch the rebound contrived to throw the rest of them in the air losing most to the floor and showering those around him with flakey pastry. More giggling ensued in Block 4.

Kent got off to a brilliant start in the Middlesex innings, Denly struck in the first over and a joyful Logan made it 8-2 in the second. Kent were on their game again. Perhaps the fielding didn't quite hit the stunning heights of Wednesday, but they still looked sharp and confident. 39/2 at the end of the powerplay enter Darren Stevens. Having been out for 0 and having been thrashed for a six in the over, it was inevitable that he would have the last laugh having Holden caught for 10 by the athletic Robinson. Golden arm.

After 8 overs Middlesex were 54/4 just like Kent had been and with the dangerman Morgan in and purring it was game on. Stevens then struck again the prize wicket of Morgan for 27 and the relief was palpable. From then on, despite a couple of loose overs that got punished, Kent always had their noses in front. Leaning impressed with ball as well as bat to secure man of the match. Stevens added a third wicket to his haul (3-32) to delight his noisy fan club and despite Hollman's fine 50 Kent made it two out of two by 16 runs (Middlesex 162/8).

Fast forward to Sunday and another cricket/Euro 2020 clash. Kent vs Gloucestershire or England vs Croatia. Wisely, the Club have moved the start time to allow people to watch both. I am one of the luckiest people in the country in possession of one of the 22,500 tickets for Wembley, but now given the timings, I'm planning to race back from Wembley and try to make it for most of the Gloucestershire game too! What could possibly go wrong?!? Come on Super Kent! Come on England!

Eddie Allcorn

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR PARTNERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT:



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