



DIGITAL MATCH PROGRAMME



Kent Spitfires vs Somerset

Monday 28 June

Match starts at 19:00

VITALITY BLAST

The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence, Canterbury



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WELCOME

By Matt Walker
Head Coach



Good evening everyone and I trust that you are keeping safe and well. We're now heading into the 'business end' of this year's Vitality Blast, and I'd like to welcome the players and support staff of Somerset to The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence.

We should rightly be pleased and encouraged by the start we have made to this tournament - we have not had to 'rely' on one player for runs or for wickets, and I'm proud of the way that we have performed together as a team. Despite some minor blips in form, I'd argue that we are one of the best fielding sides in the county circuit - carrying on a tradition that's been part of the Kent DNA for decades now.

Tonight is also our first time this season in front of the Sky Sports cameras. We put in a fantastic performance against Somerset

live on Sky back in 2019, and the players are hungry to give a repeat performance to continue making our Members and supporters proud to be associated with the Spitfires.

I'd also like to welcome Adam Milne back to the Club for his fourth stint with us - he's a fantastic cricketer and also a fantastic person to boot - exactly the sort of player and person we look for when we recruit talent.

'Milney' will not be a stranger to you all and I hope you welcome him back as 'one of our own', as our 217th Capped Player, he's certainly a Kent lad. He gives us another dimension to our bowling arsenal as we head into the end of the Blast group stage.

Walks

LAST TIME OUT

Daniel Bell-Drummond hammered 50 off 29 balls as Kent Spitfires beat Essex Eagles by 28 runs on DLS – after lightning and then rain brought an early end to the Vitality Blast match.

Bell-Drummond clubbed his third fifty of the competition during an 89-run stand for the first wicket with Zak Crawley.

The Spitfires endured two collapses to slump to 167 for nine as Simon Harmer claimed four for 26, including his 50th Blast wicket for Essex, and Dan Lawrence a county T20 record of four catches in the innings.

But 31 for four, including two scalps for Matt Milnes, in five overs meant the Eagles were short of the DLS target of 59 – handing Kent their sixth victory of the campaign.

Bell-Drummond and Crawley got the Spitfires off to a flier having been stuck in by Harmer on a used hybrid track.

Crawley received two lives, dropped on one and 14, as Bell-Drummond slapped Jamie Porter for two sixes – the visitors pummelling 82 off the Powerplay.

But after two miserly overs, Kent collapsed in sensational style with five wickets lost for 22 runs in 25 balls, as spin took over.

Nijjar, who eventually took one for 13 in an ungenerous spell, celebrated with Cristiano Ronaldo's iconic 'Sii' leap after bowling Crawley for 43, before Joe Denly was caught by Lawrence at deep midwicket trying to replicate the six he had struck the previous ball and Jack Leaning was stumped off Harmer.

Lawrence turned snarer when Bell-Drummond – who had reached a 28 ball half-century – spliced to a sprawling Harmer and Alex Blake was caught behind.



Newly contracted Darren Stevens and Jordan Cox resuscitated the innings with a 44-run stand, with Stevens clubbing a pair of sixes, but another wicket flurry ended the innings – this time four wickets falling in 16 balls.

Stevens, Cox and Qais Ahmad were all caught by Lawrence and Matt Milnes was bowled by Jimmy Neesham with the last ball.

Unlike the Spitfires, the Eagles did not pump runs early on.

Will Buttleman was beaten by Milnes' pace and bounce to be caught behind and Adam Wheater was leg-before attempting to sweep Joe Denly.

Michael Pepper chipped a Milnes slower ball to mid-off and former Spitfire Jimmy Neesham edged Fred Klaassen thickly to gully.

With lightning striking behind the Hayes Close End and then rain the game was called off after the fifth over – the minimum needed to create a result.

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RECORDS

Beating our nearest and dearest rivals Essex in any format is always sweet, but last Sunday's romp in the Vitality Blast was a literally record breaker. Our score of 236/3 from twenty overs broke our previous record of 231. With 1,500 applauding enthusiastically on a Sunday afternoon rather than 6,500 baying for blood under the lights on a Friday night coupled with an hour's delay due to the dreaded wet outfield, it wasn't quite the perfect cathartic evisceration it could have been. Nonetheless it was great fun and had amateur Kent statisticians gleefully thumbing their way through the records sections.

Crawley's rehabilitation after a tricky spell away with England continued apace with a blistering 69 off 39 balls (5x4's & 4x6's), Bell-Drummond was the mainstay with a ruthless 88 at precisely two runs per ball (4x4's & 6x6's) and Leaning's late thrashing of 42 from just 17 balls (2x4's & 4x6's) had everyone in The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence joyfully lapping it up. In total 14x4's and 14x6's found the Essex boundary. The flats on the Old Dover Road side took another fearful battering and for a couple of hours you could imagine all was right with the world...

Essex were 17 ahead of where we had been after three overs of the powerplay but then scoreboard pressure kicked in and Kent gradually took wickets as the required run rate rocketed. The chaps from the "wrong side" of the bridge ended up all out in the final over for 169, a win by 67 runs.

So all well and good and top of the table, but also for someone that watched the one-day cricket in the 1980's, the scoring rate set me thinking. I appreciate the wickets are often flatter for T20s nowadays, boundary ropes are brought in a bit and bats are bigger and heavier, but it is still almost revolutionary.

When I started watching the old Sunday League 40 over competition in 1979, the aim was to get a minimum of 160 (4 per over), 180



was par, 200 (5 per over) was competitive and anything over 230 an excellent score! Chasing over 6 per over was considered to be almost impossible! Fans were agog in 1985 at a NatWest 60-over knockout game at Canterbury vs Surrey. Graham Clinton made 146 as the visitors achieved 293/8 off 60 overs. Impossible we all thought. Kent chased it down 296/4 with two overs to spare and we thought we'd all witnessed a freak occurrence never to be seen again! Hinks 95, Benson 78 and Tavare 62* the Kent heroes that day...

Fast forward to the Mote Park in 1995 and a sizzling afternoon where Mark Ealham took Derbyshire apart in a 40 over Sunday League game. His 44 ball century set the competition record for fastest 100 as he smote the ball to all corners. Kent made 253/7 off 40 (excellent at the time) and won a classic by four runs. Again we were left thinking that was a freakish one-off but nowadays scores in T20 continue to edge up.

Can Kent maintain this momentum? A reality check at Bristol suggests they will have to be on their game to retain a spot in the top two, but it is just nice to see another win... Somerset, Sussex and Surrey will provide stern opposition. Come On Super Kent!

Eddie Allcorn



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