



DIGITAL MATCH PROGRAMME



## Kent Spitfires vs Sussex Sharks

Friday 24 June

Match starts at 19:00

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

Hello everyone and welcome back to The Spitfire Ground as we welcome everyone associated with Sussex Cricket to Canterbury.

Sussex Sharks are formidable opposition, as we have seen over the years. We've had some great battles with the Sharks in recent memory, no less our semi-final at Edgbaston last year, and it's a fixture that we always get excited about as players and coaches.

Although the result in our last Vitality Blast match against Gloucestershire wasn't what we'd hoped for, I was happy to see a much-improved performance from the lads. We spoke at length at Lord's about the need to express ourselves and to now express ourselves without pressure, and to take the match against a top Gloucestershire side right up to the final over shows a marked improvement on other performances we've shown this season.

As we head into yet another busy period of the Summer in terms of fixture congestion, we'll be looking for everyone in the squad to make contributions as we hope to put more wins on the board across all formats.

I'd also like to wish our former player Ivan Thomas the best of luck on his ironman challenge in aid of the Professional Cricketers' Trust and Cardiac Risk in the Young, two fantastic charities that I know that Ivan has close ties to. Details on how to donate to his JustGiving page are also in this programme.

Keep supporting the lads, and I hope you enjoy the match.

Walks

## LAST TIME OUT



**Gloucestershire remain on course for the Vitality Blast quarter-finals after a tense five-run win over the Kent Spitfires at Canterbury.**

[View full scorecard](#)

Ian Cockbain hit 64 from 46 balls and Glenn Phillips 62 as Gloucestershire posted 195 for four, a total that was just beyond beyond the reigning champions.

Mohammad Amir was the pick of the visiting bowlers with two for 30, while Ryan Higgins held his nerve at the death to limit Jack Leaning to 13 from the final six balls.

Leaning finished unbeaten on 37 but was unable to hit the required 19 from the final over as Kent finished on 190 for five. Alex Blake hit 36 to pass 2000 T20 runs for the Spitfires and Jordan Cox made 32.

Kent won the toss and chose to bowl, handing a Blast debut to 19-year-old Jas Singh, but it was Leaning who opened the bowling and he struck in the first over to remove Miles Hammond for four, after Tawanda Muyeye took a steepling catch.

Chris Dent and Cockbain took Gloucestershire to 49 for one after the Powerplay and although Qais Ahmad's next over went for just three, Singh's first over went for 26, effectively hitting him out of the attack.

Dent holed out to Qais in the next over and was caught at long on by Alex Blake for 40, but it did little to arrest the visitors' momentum. Cockbain smashed Qais back over his head for four to pass 50, before finally falling when he hit Matt Milnes to Blake at long off.

## LAST TIME OUT (CONTINUED)

When Matt Quinn went off injured after five balls of the 18th over, he was replaced by Joe Denly, who immediately bowled Jack Taylor for 12.

Phillips was dropped by Blake at the start of the 19th and he cut hit Milnes' next delivery, a full toss, for six to reach his half-century.

In a measure of how dismal Kent's title defence has been, when Grant Stewart's final over only went for six, home fans were relieved the visitors hadn't passed 200.

Kent kept up with the run rate for the first three overs of the chase, but when Josh Shaw came on from the Pavilion End Tawanda Muyeye was caught by the inrushing Ryan Higgins for 11.

With the required rate already edging above 12, Denly was caught by a diving Shaw off Tom Smith for 31 in the tenth over and Smith then returned the favour in the 12th with a juggling boundary to remove Cox off Shaw's bowling, although replays suggested his foot was on the rope when he initially threw the ball in the air.

Sam Billings reinjected some belief with two sixes off Phillips at the start of the 14th but he was out for 26 when he hit Amir down Taylor's throat.

Blake and Leaning just about kept the hosts in contention. The 17th over went for 15 and the 18th 13, but Amir, who signed for the Spitfires in 2021 but never actually played, had Blake caught on the boundary in the 19th.

Grant Stewart would have been out to the next ball after Miles Hammond took a deflected catch, but the umpire signalled a no-ball, leaving Ryan Higgins to defend 19 off the final over. The first two balls, to Leaning, were dots, the third went for four and the fourth for two.

Leaning hit the fifth for six, meaning a maximum off the final ball would have given Kent a tie, but he could only manage a single.

Kent batter Alex Blake said: "It's not been the greatest campaign so far for us it was a case of expressing ourselves I think, that's what we spoke about. We had quite a big chat after the Lord's game and we just said let's go out there and not hold anything back. That's what we did with the bat and we got pretty close, but unfortunately couldn't get over the line, but that was a bit more like the old Kent of last year and we'll be taking that into the last three games.

"I thought they bowled pretty well at the end there, I found it pretty tough to get Amir away, which is why he's a world-class bowler I guess.

"We know what Jack can do, he did it all last season and me and Sam (Billings), we actually said in the changing room, let's make it like the old days, let's go out there and win games again for Kent. We thought we were going to do it and obviously we both got out, but Sam freed himself up, played beautifully and got the momentum going and myself and Jack chipped in as well. We know we've got the firepower but we can't seem to get it all going at the moment."



# IVAN THOMAS' EPIC IRONMAN CHALLENGE



**Ivan Thomas always wanted to do an ironman challenge, however he didn't envisage doing one so soon. Thomas had ambitions of completing an ironman once he'd had a full cricket career but that was cut short in 2020 when he had to retire from the game.**

The 30-year-old is undertaking a mammoth challenge on 10 July which includes a 3.9km swim in Switzerland, followed by a 180km cycle through the Alps and finishing off with a marathon, all to raise funds for the Professional Cricketers' Trust and CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young).

[Donate here](#)

The former Kent bowler had to have heart surgery as a youngster after finding out that he had an undetected heart condition. Thomas went on to take 114 wickets for Kent before his retirement.

The Professional Cricketers' Trust sat down with Ivan to discuss his upcoming challenge:

**Q. It seems like an extremely difficult challenge, why choose an ironman?**

A. There are definitely easier ways to raise money but I'd heard about it before playing cricket and I started telling everyone that when I retire I'm going to do an ironman, thinking that would be 20 years down the line but then I had to retire and people kept mentioning doing the ironman. It's one of those challenges that's tough enough that hopefully people will feel like they can donate towards it so it's a good challenge.

**Q. Why did you want to raise money for the Professional Cricketers' Trust and CRY?**

A. The Professional Cricketers' Trust is something that you hear a lot about when you're playing cricket and you don't necessarily see what great work it does while you're still in the game. For me personally it really came to light when I went to a golf day for Alan Igglesden and saw what the Trust did for him was incredible. I've been helped a lot by the PCA when I retired with my transition from the game in to my next career and it's been phenomenal so it's something that I really want to keep giving back to over the next few years and this felt like a great opportunity to raise money for the Trust.

I first came across the charity CRY when I was playing cricket for Leeds Bradford University and my captain, Tommy Hardman, actually passed away in his sleep from an undetected heart condition. His parents told us about the charity when we wanted to raise some money in his

# VAN THOMAS' EPIC IRONMAN CHALLENGE (CONTINUED)

memory. Then, when I was playing for Kent I heard Calum Haggett's story who was once pulled out of an England Under-19 World Cup squad to have immediate open heart surgery to fix a damaged valve in his heart which saved his life. He carried on playing professionally for 10 years, which was a great success story for CRY.

Not too many years after that, very luckily, I found out that I had a heart condition too and was whisked away for heart surgery, which fixed what could have been a much more serious issue in the future and now I'm fine. So, I learnt a lot about the incredible work they did, but sadly too often people come to the charity because of a sad story. It would be really nice to push the great work that they do.

Both charities have suffered during the pandemic because they rely on people doing these sort of events to raise money which we haven't been able to do properly since before Covid. So, it's nice to be able to do this for two charities that have had a real impact on my life.

## **Q. How did the PCA help you in your transition from cricket to coffee?**

A. Each county gets a Personal Development Manager and at Kent mine was Tom Jones, he was phenomenal. He approached me and asked what interests I have outside of cricket that I could do when I retire. I ended up doing quite a few work experience placements in my time off over the winter but really I just learnt what I didn't like. Then I fell into the coffee world by spending time in coffee shops and wanting to learn a little bit more about it.

I approached Tom and he mentioned that PCA member, Tim Linley, had opened a

coffee shop up in Leeds. He was a great help because I spoke to him a lot about how he transitioned into the world of coffee and how he's made that change to become a business owner. The PCA has also helped finance some of my education since leaving cricket such as my roasting qualifications and that helped me get the job I'm in now and I'm lucky enough to say that it's a dream role. It's been an awesome 18 months after leaving the game and I've been able to set up my own coffee business because the PCA has supported me.

## **Q. What's the preparation and training for the ironman been like?**

A. Originally I just planned to do a half so it was a bit of a shock to myself and my girlfriend after two weeks of booking it that I noticed it was actually a full ironman. It normally takes 18 months training for a full one but I've only given myself six months because I thought it was a half. There's been some tough training and dark mornings getting up early in the winter. Preparation has been challenging but I feel in a good place now just two weeks out. If I'm not ready now I don't think I ever will be.

## **Q. How much are you looking to raise?**

A. I hope that we can raise the £2,000 that we set on the JustGiving page but I understand that it's a difficult time and people don't really have a lot of spare money in the current climate so the main aim is to raise as much awareness for both these great charities as possible.

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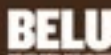
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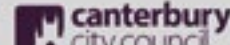
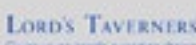
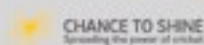
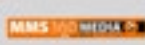
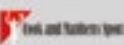
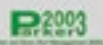
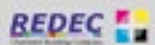
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