GARGOYLES PASS STERNEST OF TESTS

Alstonefield's Winning XI against Ashbourne Away

To say this was an outstanding team effort does not do justice to the invaluable contributions made by each and every member of the team. Up against one of the strongest Ashbourne CC Sunday XIs, this was always going to be one of the more challenging matches of the season and it didn't disappoint. To emerge victorious has to be one of the most satisfying results in Alstonefield CC's short history, simply because it meant everyone was at the top of their game. If the Man of the Match award could be awarded to groups it would have gone to all six Gargoyle bowlers, who did not falter in applying wicket inducing pressure to the Ashbourne batsmen. In fact the award deservedly went to Harry Jones for his resolute and priceless 42 runs on an unpredictable, slow wicket, which, it turned out, was roughly the winning margin**.**

Jon Lane and Chris Wilkins opened against the outswing of Overton and bounce of Najibi. It was the former who did the damage, firstly getting Lane to cover middle stump, only to find the ball arcing onto his off stump and then inducing Wilkins to play an on-side flick off the legs, just as the ball moved away from him to clatter middle stump. 15 for 2. Shahid Ali was joined by Harry Jones and the match defining partnership began. They had put on 52 runs when Ali was caught for 15 in the 18th over. Crucially they had scored at 4 runs per over on a difficult surface. Jones found another willing partner in Ben King and these two added 34 in 5 overs, before King holed out for 10. Jones was eventually dismissed for 42 in the penultimate over, leaving Tony Guest and Rob Handscombe to add a priceless 13 runs and take the score to 126 for 7 off 30 overs. Above par was the consensus, providing the Gargoyles' bowling was on the money.

Rob Handscombe added a priceless 13 runs

When Ben King and Tony Guest had finished their opening spells, Ashbourne were 17 for 1 off 9 overs. The pressure was now on the batsmen. By the time Chris Wilkins and Simon Smith had bowled a couple of overs each, that pressure had intensified. 34 for 5 off 13 overs. Shahid Ali and Ian McKay began their spells with maidens and wickets. There were too many decent batsmen in the Ashbourne line up for there not to be some resistance. Liam Duffy and Richard Hill batted sensibly, taking singles and punishing the occasional loose ball. They had moved the score to 70 when Hill was run out for 19. Andy Hill joined Duffy and the scoring rate increased, but by this time Ashbourne needed 9 runs an over. Hill perished with 86 on the board. Duffy saw it through to the close, making 23 not out. 93 was Ashbourne's total.

All the bowlers hit the coin. Chris Wilkins' pace and away swing brought him 3 wickets for 14 runs. Ben King put successive dropped catches off his bowling behind him, to post the incredible figures of 5 overs for 5 runs. The achievement of all the bowlers was to never let the Ashbourne run rate get ahead of 3 per over.

Ben King was one of the 'Superb Six' Alstonefield bowlers whose combined figures were 30 Overs : 6 Maidens : 8 Wickets for 78 Runs

The other X factor in this victory was the Gargoyles' catching. 7 of 9 wickets were down to safe hands. Alan Hayes took 2, Harry Jones 2, Ian McKay, Chris Wilkins one each and there was a career first catch for David Joyce. None were spectacular. All were held without fuss.

A noteworthy win, made all the more satisfying because each and every member of the team made a tangible contribution to the result.

ALSTONEFIELD CC 126 FOR 7 BEAT ASHBOURNE CC 93 FOR 9 BY 33 RUNS