Steep 1st XI v St Cross

Steep showed their promotion credentials by snatching a win against the odds from a young and talented St Cross side also vying for a way out of County Div 4.

The game started in predictable fashion with skipper John Smith losing the toss and Steep being asked to bat against the only new ball of the game. The St Cross opening bowlers took no time in pushing home this advantage and sent back the heart of the Steep batting without a run being scored.

A precarious 14 for 3 became a disastrous 27 for 4 when in form Dale Collins was caught off a leading edge. Smith and old timer Graham Hughes set about repairing the damage but runs were very hard to come by against disciplined bowling and good field placement. Smith fell to a wonder catch from his opposite number, leading to the only meaningful partnership of the game. Key all-rounder Alex Bone worked the ball around well and, supported by Hughes, the scoreboard finally started to move. Hughes fell to an ugly shot, but the tail supported Bone very well until he fell 4 short of a well-deserved 50. Tom Mercer and last man Mike Murray saw the score to 150 and an extra point although the general feeling was that Steep were 25 runs light.

After tea, Mike Murray fired up and launched into an opening salvo of express pace. The young St. Cross top order were unable to contain this and Murray picked up the first 4 wickets to fall; three caught behind and one clean bowled. All the time, Middleton looked ominous and found some support in the shape of Aron. These two looked to take the game away from Steep, but they reckoned without that man Bone. It took just two overs of quality off-spin for Middleton to choke and knock a simple catch to Freddie Hughes-Stanton.

Still the home side were in the driving seat with Aron and Burgess keeping up with the scoring rate. A quality delivery from Bone removed Burgess and in his next over a similar fate befell Aron.

Steep needed to keep runs down to push up the run rate and this was achieved by the introduction of Mark Turnball who bowled a fantastic spell of 5 overs for 5 runs at the death with the added bonus of two wickets. The last over saw St Cross needing 18 runs, but they fell well short and a jubilant Steep celebrated a win that they had worked so hard to produce.

Next week sees a home game against previously unbeaten Hurstbourne, so a better batting performance will be required.