

## Steep V Wherwell

Steeps unbeaten run remains intact despite a below par performance against a spirited Wherwell side. This week it was the batsmen who were the heroes, in particular Dean Knight and Sean Noble who formed a record breaking partnership in searing conditions.

The afternoon seemed to be going to plan as the toss was inevitably lost, but to everyone's surprise Wherwell elected to field due to early player departures. This seemed like a good decision as the opening partnership of Noble and Dale Collins struggled to get going against some tight opening bowling. Collins fell for 12 but not before setting a stable platform for the rest of the innings. The rest of the afternoon belonged to Noble and Knight who flayed the wilting attack to all parts. Noble reached his second fifty of the season with a fine sweep and Knight followed shortly after. The pair continued to rack up the runs and the partnership was over 160 when Noble ran out of steam and skied one to the keeper. He departed with 89 runs to his name; a personal best for the team and one that was well received by his team mates and mascot Finlay Noble.

Makeshift number 4 Graham Hughes ran himself out immediately and Knight was finally dismissed for an excellent 79 leaving second eleven run machine Ed Ellis to carve a fine cameo and see the score to 231.

This was felt to be a stiff target for Wherwell to chase down, but the Steep opening pair of Tom Callingham and Mike Murray were in a charitable mood and failed to find their normal tight lines. Murray picked up Wickham but only thanks to an outstanding boundary catch by Freddie Hughes-Stanton. The second wicket partner exceeded 50 and worried looks were on the faces of the Steep fielders. However, Steep have strength in depth these days and change bowlers John Smith and Tom Mercer soon broke this stand. It remained tough going as Wherwell showed they had a deep batting line up.

The scoring rate was accelerating worryingly when Smith called on Hughes-Stanton to try and make inroads. This he did by removing the unorthodox Nicel exposing the tail to key all-rounder Ally Bone. Bone soon snared the opposition skipper but some enterprising shots from Adams and Guilfoil kept Wherwell in the hunt. The game was only safe when a fine piece of fielding from Dale Collins effected a run out with 2 overs remaining.

The winning margin of 25 runs suggests a relatively easy victory but it was not so: Steep must up their game in coming weeks if they are to stay at the Div 4 summit and pick up their second championship of the millennium.