

Steep v AWE Tadley

Steep's unbeaten season stays on track but only thanks to a stunning 9th wicket partnership of 60 between Tom Mercer and Tom Callingham. This was by far the worst display by Steep this year but hopefully will represent the nadir of their efforts in 2013.

The afternoon started with skipper John Smith winning a toss and electing to field on an afternoon suited for fielding but a wicket and outfield suited to runs. This proved to be the case as young Davis made the most of being dropped without scoring and played some superb on-side shots off Mike Murray and Tom Callingham. Murray picked up a couple of wickets but was proving expensive.

The skipper elected to take the pace off the ball and introduced Mark Turnbull and himself into the attack. This had the desired effect as these two dried up the runs but continued to make inroads into the Tadley middle order. Still Davis attacked; meaning that Steep became content to give him the single and contain the other batsmen.

Further disaster struck when Mike Preston tried to field the ball with his forehead and needed a visit to Petersfield Hospital for stitches. All credit should be paid to the Tadley team who offered a 12th man for the duration of the visit, something that would not have been done by many teams in this league.

Having motored past 50, Davis was only denied a fine hundred by a smart catch from John Hegan off Tom Mercer's first over.

The tail was soon mopped up by a short burst of Ally Bones off-spin including a fine catch by makeshift wicketkeeper, Graham Hughes.

The target for victory of 175 looked well within their grasp even allowing for the fact that run machine Dean Knight was not in the starting XI. However, this was not the case as openers Dale Collins and Sean Noble fell cheaply, shortly followed by a groggy Preston. John Hegan and Graham Hughes steadied the boat with a 50 partnership but fell in consecutive balls. Three further wickets left Steep floundering on 115 for 8. However Steep bat deep these days and in the two Toms, Callingham and Mercer, they had a glimmer of hope.

These two advanced the score without taking chances and made sure that the bad ball was dispatched to the boundary. The total soon came into reach and the Steep dressing room fell silent. The 41st over was a poor one and Mercer stroked 2 fours to leave Callingham the pleasure of a late cut to seal a barely deserved victory.

Despite the nature of their loss, the Tadley players acknowledged the achievements of the two Toms and were warmly applauded off the pitch.

Steep must look to improve if they are to continue their streak. A more professional attitude and intensity is required starting next week against strugglers Ramsdell.