



WORCESTERSHIRE at NEW ROAD – 2-4 APRIL 2011

DAY 1 - Worcestershire won the toss and batted in this 3-Dayer and, at 2.14 pm, were 175-2 with Vikram Solanki lording it on 110 no. At that point, he turned Matt Higginbottom off his legs but failed to keep it down and Tom Craddock took a low catch that, with hindsight, altered the whole pattern of the day.

An hour and three-quarters later, Worcester were 248 all out, having lost 8 wickets for 73 runs, with Tom Craddock taking 4 and Matt Higginbottom three. Some good close catching helped enormously.

The Leeds-Bradford reply began well but 2 quick wickets meant that, at 46-2, the reply was in the balance. But, this time the wheels did not come off, as Ben Slater with Alex Blake steadied things, with Slater collecting an excellent 50, and then, when he lost his off-stump, in came Joe Leach on his home ground to double the score in an unbroken stand with Alex Blake, who has also completed 50.

In all, the good crowd, who were let in for free, saw over 400 runs, 13 wickets and 108 overs in some early April sunshine. It shows that, quite simply, Cricket still works in its purest form when players get on with it, go when the Umpire puts his finger up (ie no Decision Review System) and don't spend an eternity moving fielders hither and thither.

DAY 2 – Leeds-Bradford got a lead but not as big one as had been hoped. Alex Blake got a ball that would probably have passed under the stumps as it rapped him on the ankles. One of Steve Gale's easier decisions ! Joe Leach fell for 49 and the other wickets fell too consistently.

But Adam Wilson again struck early when Worcester batted again, trapping James Cameron LBW in the few overs possible before lunch. Just after the break, Brad Kruger took two in two, including Solanki, to reduce Worcester to 51-3 and inspire genuine hopes of our second win against a County side.

But the bowlers then lost their lines and Kervezee especially profited and Worcester closed 151 ahead with 6 2nd innings remaining. Some 96 minutes were lost to rain and bad light after tea on Day 2.

DAY 3 – Quick wickets were the order of the day but Darren Mitchell had other ideas as he built an innings of 146 to lift his team into a strong position. They declared on the stroke of lunch, setting Leeds-Bradford 327 in 3 hours + 20 overs.

Slater and Clarke began as if they meant it but, when Clarke and Moore went in successive deliveries, a re-building exercise had to take place. Ben Slater batted until tea but no-one could stay with him for too long (except Joe Leach who was dismissed for 49 again !) and tea came at 134-5. Ben Slater went soon after tea and defeat loomed.

Luis Reece then found some form with the bat after taking his first two wickets earlier in the day. He stayed with Brad Kruger for over an hour and Worcestershire finally called a halt in the 6th of the final 20 overs for a very honourable draw.

Leeds-Bradford more than held their own in this game and, at several points, had a genuine chance to beat Worcestershire. Back in 2002, the 3-Day game against Leicestershire was over in 2 as Leicestershire won by an innings and 316 runs. It shows how far this team has come in the intervening time.
