

STAFFORDSHIRE v SUFFOLK REPORT 260409
MCCA KNOCKOUT CUP GROUP 2

Staffordshire made a positive and confident opening to their attempt to qualify for the later stages of the 2009 Minor Counties Knock-Out Cup, with an 82 run victory over 2007 cup winners Suffolk at Audley.

Home skipper Paul Goodwin led his team to success in his first game since taking up the reins from Richard Harvey permanently, and was delighted with the outcome saying, "It was a great start for us. It was nice to beat a strong side, who are expected to be challenging at the top of the group. Overall it was a good solid performance."

Electing to bat first, Staffordshire got off to an exciting opening with Peter Wilshaw and Jack Manuel taking the attack to the Suffolk bowlers.

Debutant Manuel showed his attacking intentions on his debut for the county, by clearing the ropes in the third over of the innings. The 18 year old Tamworth player, who is also contracted to Worcestershire, went on to add two further maximums in his 28 ball stay at the wicket, which produced 35 runs, to help get Staffordshire off to a flying start.

Longton opener Wilshaw was joined by Manuel's Worcestershire colleague Dave Wheeldon and the pair continued to keep the score board ticking nicely. Former Leek player Wheeldon, now attached to Wolverhampton, looked aggrieved when adjudged lbw for 25 with the total on 117.

Wilshaw had completed a well deserved half century but lost his head, and his wicket, in trying another big hit off the bowling of off spinner Chris Swallow.

The introduction of an all spin attack with Swallow in partnership with Tim Huggins, began to peg back the Staffordshire scoring spree. The middle order of Richard Harvey, Nick James and Mo Sheikh all made starts but failed to push on, and the innings began to flounder at 183 for six after their positive opening.

Staffordshire's second debutant, 17 year old Ben Maguire in conjunction with Paul Goodwin began to increase the tempo and although both perished in the late innings run chase, Maguire for 25 and Goodwin 15, they helped to push the score on to an eventual competitive total of 252 for nine at the close of their 50 overs.

A bright unbeaten 16 from Greg Willott, including two boundaries and one six, was added to as Will Purser creamed the final ball to the boundary from the only ball he faced. Former Essex bowler Justin Bishop was the pick of the Sussex attack with figures of four for 65.

The visitors made a disastrous start to their run chase losing their top four batsmen with just 26 runs on the board. Greg Willott struck twice in two deliveries and then added to these successes with the wicket of Freddie Klokker, who has been recently captaining

Denmark in their ICC World Cup qualifying programme. Fellow opening bowler Will Purser, with fond memories of his figures of five for 14 in last seasons encounter against the same side, removed the dangerous Tom Huggins to leave the visitors top order in disarray.

Wicket keeper Chris Warn decided from this perilous position that attack was the best option and, in a display of explosive hitting, he struck 42 from just 19 deliveries before skying a catch off the bowling of Craig Barker, playing on his home Audley ground.

A patient 53 from Nick Lee kept Suffolk up with the required run rate but following his dismissal, the innings tailed off to finish on 170 all out with 10.5 overs remaining.

Norton left arm seamer Greg Willott recorded his first five wicket haul for the county to finish with five for 39 whilst Will Purser added to his previous success against the East Anglian side with three for 45.

In summing up Paul Goodwin added, "Pete (Wilshaw) and Jack (Manuel) were fantastic at the top of the order, getting us off to a flier. We had a wobble in the middle which was a little disappointing but we managed to work our way up to a good total in excess of 250.

The difference between the two sides was then highlighted by our new ball bowlers who knocked over their top order. We then controlled the game to claim a deserved win. It was the start we wanted and we need to take it on next week."

Staffordshire travel to North Mymms next Sunday to play Hertfordshire in their next group match.

ALLAN SMITH
Score card faxed/