

MINOR COUNTIES KNOCKOUT TROPHY

BERKSHIRE MOVE ONWARDS AND UPWARDS - BUT ONLY JUST

Berkshire enjoyed a narrow and nail biting 17-run victory over Herefordshire in the first match of the zonal round of the Minor Counties Knock-out Trophy.

Following thunder and lightening, excellent work by the Henley CC ground staff ensured a delay of only one hour and no loss of overs in this 50 overs per side encounter.

Losing the toss and being asked to bat, Berkshire amassed 291-4 from their allotted overs. Henley is a small ground and whilst highly competitive the total posted was only just above par.

Following the early loss of Mitchell Stokes (4) and Jon Trower (15), Reading's David Barnes and Henley and Berkshire Captain Bjorn Mordt steadied the ship before Barnes was smartly caught and bowled for an excellent 49. A fine player, David still seeks that elusive maiden half century which must surely come soon.

There then followed a superb 128 round partnership between Mordt and Steve Naylor who struck a typically belligerent 62.

The final 10 overs yielded a further 90 runs with Paul Carter striking some lusty blows to finish on 29 not out and Captain Mordt reaching his century. "Bjorn's innings was superb", stated Manager David Morris, "he paced his innings beautifully and his 112 not out on his home ground must have given him immense pleasure".

Starting their reply, Herefordshire soon lost veteran opener Harshad Patel bowled by Tom Lambert. The opening spell of Lambert and professional Richard Johnson was economical although both bowlers had problems controlling the swinging ball.

Unfortunately the first and second change seam bowlers proved less threatening, bowling either too short or too full on both sides of the wicket. Herefordshire began to gain momentum and a fine innings of 86 by opening bat, Hall, and an even better 104 from number 3, Langford, took the opposition to 211 for one before wickets fell in quick succession. At this stage Herefordshire were in with a real chance of victory and an expensive 4 over spell from Paul Carter kept them in the hunt.

The introduction of Carl Crowe (3-54) put a brake on proceedings and second spells from Johnson, Naylor (1-39) and Lambert (2-54) aided by a fine run-out from James Morris put the Royal County back in the driving seat.

Amid the encircling gloom the Herefordshire innings closed on 274-7 leaving Berkshire winners by a narrow 17 run margin.

"A win is a win", said Manager Morris, "but we need our bowling to show greater discipline if we are to progress in the competition. Our fielding was once again excellent and I have no worries about our ability to post big totals".

Berkshire's next match in the competition is on Sunday 4th May when they make the long journey to Camborne CC to play Cornwall. With Mitchell Stokes unavailable it is hoped that his place will be filled by ex-Hampshire professional Jono McLean subject

to his registration being approved in time. Otherwise the team will remain unchanged.