

Foakes hits form but champions fall short

By Richard Spiller

BEN Foakes spearheaded Surrey's commanding display at Emirates Old Trafford – but the champions could not launch their new campaign with a victory.

Setting Lancashire 444 to win, they were held off on the final day by Lancashire's stubborn resistance, having to settle for the best part of a draw in their bid to retain the LV County Championship Division One crown.

Foakes, subject of much speculation about whether he will retain his place in this summer's Ashes series as England's wicketkeeper, played a central role in ensuring Surrey were in charge for much of the match.

Sent in on day one, they were in peril at 77-4 but Foakes (76) and Jamie Smith's 54 – full of beautifully timed strokes from one of England's most talented young players – added 87 for the fifth wicket to grab the initiative.

Their work was built on by Cameron Steel, handed a key role in balancing the team. The leg-spinning all-rounder has been on the fringes of the side since arriving at the Kia Oval two years ago via spells with Middlesex, Durham and Hampshire.

A highly successful winter spent playing grade cricket in Perth has produced a massive boost to Steel's game and he took charge in hammering 141 no, including 14 fours and three sixes, driving the visitors to the commanding heights of 442 all out.

Runners-up last season, Lancashire's reply owed much to opener Keaton Jennings making 76 but Surrey chipped away on a pitch which



Ben Foakes in action against Somerset

Picture: Mark Sandom

had steadily become more batsman-friendly.

Australian Sean Abbott, having made 42 earlier, offered the main cutting edge in claiming 5-50 as the hosts declined to 197-8. New Zealand's Colin de Grandhomme – who enjoyed a spell at The Oval last year – cracked 67 in reducing the deficit before they were dismissed for 291.

Choosing not to enforce the follow-on, skipper Rory Burns (54) and Ollie Pope (38) extended the advantage but it was Foakes who took centre-stage.

Having signalled last week that he deals with all the chatter about his

England position by ignoring it, the 30-year-old stroked the ball beautifully to hit 12 fours and a six in his unbeaten 103, the 14th first-class century of his career.

Steel added another useful 31, Burns conservatively set Lancashire 444 in 11 overs of the third day plus the whole of the last, Surrey chasing their first win at the ground since 2004.

Lancashire never looked likely to chase or achieve that target, despite Luke Wells (45) and Jennings (14) putting on 65 for the first wicket. The pair fell within six balls of each other but Bohannan was missed on two at slip

by Pope off Abbott, going on to hit 108 and in tandem with Steven Croft (56 no) assuring his side of a draw at 247-3.

Burns, whose side earned 12 points for their labours, reckoned: "It was a very pleasing four days.

"I can't really fault the effort. There have been some very good individual performances over the four days but I think the way we have gone about things as a team is most pleasing. It was solid but there was a bit of panache in there."

Surrey's next challenge is a home date with Hampshire from Thursday.

A bit of time for reflection



WITH the domestic season coming to an end and only the cup finals remaining, it is a reflective period for Wallington Little League. This time last year, we were

down and out. No teams, no pitch, no players.

Having completed the first season back and it being a resounding success, we have taken the decision to expand and add another age group, effectively opening the door for another 70+ local boys and girls of all abilities to join.

We offer entry level football and therefore do not believe in trials. If you want to play football, you should be given the chance to do so. We work on a first come first served basis. We will provide football sessions during the closed season as an integration period for the new players.

The 2023/24 season will start in September and play on Sunday mornings. Kick-off times vary but will be between 9am and noon.

The season fee is £40, including provision of the kit, which will be returned at the end of the season for re-distribution as part of our Think Green campaign.

We also have a football boot recycling programme, meaning you can borrow, keep, and donate unused boots which still have life left in them.

To request a registration form, just e-mail littleleaguewallington@gmail.com. We have limited spaces available for the Inters league (school years 6 and 7 as of September) but have fair availability for the junior's league (school years 4 and 5 as of September).

Nagging dread over Lampard's return

By Tim Harrison

MOST Chelsea fans want June to arrive early to put this season behind them and regroup for a more stable fresh campaign.

After the midweek action in Spain, in the first leg of the Champions League quarter-final, it's back to basics as the Blues host Brighton on Saturday afternoon.

Frank Lampard will get a warm reception at Stamford Bridge, despite a lacklustre defeat at Wolves, but the fact that he's the fourth man in charge in nine months means many feel dazed by change.

Tuchel, Potter, Bruno and now Lampard will struggle to make a top-heavy squad perform consistently, and there's a nagging sense of dread that the former Chelsea midfielder's second spell in the hotseat may end as the first stint did.

But there's no time to rest as Real Madrid return to the Bridge

on Tuesday for what will be a boisterous occasion.

Spare a thought for the beleaguered press box organiser, who is trying to shoehorn more than 300 hacks into a space which usually accommodates 150.

Perhaps some of the overflow could sit next to Lampard in the dugout.

Two Easter defeats seal Casuals' fate



Pitchside at Corinthians' match

Picture: Stuart Tree

Isthmian league Premier Division
Cray Wanderers 1,
Corinthian-Casuals 0
Corinthian-Casuals 0,
Kingstonian 2

By Finlay Stubbs

CORINTHIAN-CASUALS' five-year stay in the Isthmian Premier Division was brought to an end after two defeats over the Easter weekend to Cray Wanderers and local rivals Kingstonian.

Casuals came into the weekend full of confidence

after back-to-back wins and clean sheets under interim boss Brian Adamson as they travelled to face play-off hopefuls Cray Wanderers on Saturday.

Despite Casuals creating a couple of early chances, it was the hosts, who took the points through Nyren Clunis in the first half.

The focus soon turned to Bank Holiday Monday as Casuals took on rivals Kingstonian in a highly anticipated encounter in front of a vocal crowd of 577 in Tolworth.

Kingstonian took the lead in the 16th minute through Ibrahim Bangura's long-range strike. In the second half, the visitors doubled their lead through Tom Collins, who slotted his effort calmly into the corner.

Casuals were forced to end the game with nine men as both Sean Agun and Simba Kudyiwa saw red following late challenges.

Up next for Casuals is an away trip to Brightlingsea Regent before returning home for the last game of the season against Billericay town on Saturday, April 22.

10km bests for Hercules

By George Mallett

Hercules Wimbledon Athletic Club filled a generally quiet Easter of running with a number of 10km races throughout the country.

Making the return home over the holiday period was Sam Todd. The former City of Norwich AC athlete took over 45 seconds off his 10km personal best thanks to a fourth-place finish in the Easter Sunday Trowse 10k. Todd recorded a mark of 33.17, his first time under the 34-minute barrier, and was less than two minutes behind race winner Reuben Andrews.

Closer to home, a number of athletes took a break from their London marathon build-up to take on the Eton Dorney 10k on Saturday.

There was a sea of yellow as Hercules athletes came in fourth, fifth and sixth, all under 35 minutes.

That is if we discount some questionable provisional results, which at the time of writing had both the men's and women's world records broken.

We will assume that they may be, in fact, results for the 5km also taking place at the same time, but if not congratulations new world record holders Matt Whitehouse and Kate Mercer, you surely deserved more press.

First home for the Hercules trio was George Longworth in a new personal best of 34.13.