

# Jetlagged Jacks given World Cup audition

By Richard Spiller

WILL Jacks dashed 7,000 miles to boost England's prospects for success in Bangladesh.

The Surrey all-rounder, having proved surplus to requirements for the Test team in New Zealand, was despatched for a 14-hour flight to join the white ball squad due to begin their short tour in Mirpur on Wednesday.

Jacks had been due to arrive in time for the three-match T20 programme, which starts on March 9 in Chattogram, alongside batsman Ben Duckett. But a side injury to Somerset skipper Tom Abell, suffered while playing for the England Lions in Sri Lanka last month, left the one-day international squad needing reinforcement.

Having taken 6-161 on his Test debut, against Pakistan in Rawalpindi in December, Jacks has already enjoyed success in Asia and this call-up gives him an opportunity to gain useful experience in the 50-over format. Given the World Cup is being played in India later this year, that could come in especially useful.

He joined Surrey colleagues Sam Curran, Jason Roy, Reece Topley and Chris Jordan but, perhaps not surprisingly, missed Sunday's practice session because of jetlag.

Jacks's scintillating hitting at the top of the order, such an important factor in his county's Vitality Blast set-up, saw him play a part in England's 4-3 series win over Pakistan in a T20 series during the autumn and he has been signed by Indian Premier League side Royal Challengers Bangalore.



Will Jacks batting for Surrey last year *Picture: MARK SANDOM*

That means Jacks will miss the opening stages of the English domestic season, having played a key role in Surrey winning the LV County Championship title last year, scoring 648 runs – including two centuries – and taking 17 wickets. They open the campaign against Lancashire, second last year; at Old Trafford on Thursday, April 6.

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## Success across the board

By George Mallett



**HERCULES** Wimbledon Athletic Club enjoyed one of their strongest English National Cross Country Championships performances in years as individual and team success was seen across the age groups.

Saturday's racing at Bolesworth Castle, near Chester, saw the best in England converge for a championship finale and one where Hercules under-13 boys took an unprecedented team silver.

Hercules' quartet of Thomas Whorton, Theo Creed, Harry Allen and Sam Dyson finished within 1.4 seconds of each other in 18th, 23rd, 40th and 41st respectively. The combined score of 122 saw them well clear of Bristol & West AC in third and only 27 points from winners Herne Hill Harriers.

In the junior women's race Ellen Weir, who won silver in this race last year, showed a return to form thanks to a seventh-place finish. For Weir, though somewhat disappointed personally, it matches her finish from the South of England Championships just four weeks ago, albeit with the North and Midlands also present this time.

In doing so, Weir led Hercules to fifth in the team competition, aided by impressive finishes from Niamh Thompson and Millie Thorpe in 38th and 79th respectively.

Saturday's event finished with the senior men's event, the longest of the day at almost 12k with a field over well over 1,500 starters. For the first time since 1974, Hercules achieved four finishers inside the top 100, with cross-country team captain Fred Slembeck leading the charge in a position-best 42nd.

Behind him, a trio of George Mallett, James Stockings and Archie Walton finished 82nd, 93rd and 98th respectively. With Oli Carrington in 131st and Ed Mallett in 152nd, Hercules finished ninth in the team competition, almost matching their eighth place finish from 2022.

Just outside the scoring places, Finn Johnson showed the squad's depth in 188th. Across the final age groups, notable results included Cameron Elliot and Theo Webb, who finished in 53rd and 94th in the U17 boys' race.

## Casuals keep their first clean sheet

CORINTHIAN-CASUALS got their long-awaited first clean sheet of the season following a 0-0 draw against play-off-chasing Canvey Island in a game that either side could have won.

The opening stages were closely fought, with both teams playing on the front foot and testing their opponents' back line, leading to a high-tempo game, although neither side was able to control possession.

By Finlay Stubbs

Justin Fevrier's men began to grow into the half, causing Canvey problems with their movement in and around the box. Casuals had a chance to go into the break ahead as a corner was swung in from the left, which goalkeeper Bobby Mason failed to deal with, but Malakai Hyman put his effort over.

The second half followed a

similar format to the first, with both teams looking to attack and exploit any weaknesses in their opponents' defence.

Casuals then had two big chances in the space of three minutes as Sahid Kamara ran through on goal but he was kept out by the feet of Mason. The keeper was then called into action again as Mack Reilly drove into the box and his shot was blocked, before the rebound

fell to Kamara, who was once more denied by Mason.

Casuals keeper Callum Coulter was then forced to make a superb save in the closing stages to deny Charlie Edwards at the front post and ensure the hosts claimed their first shut-out of the season.

Next up is an away trip to Margate on Saturday before a home derby against Carshalton Athletic on March 11.

## No goals but plenty of entertainment



Danny Anderson and

By Patrick Hutchison

A CHILLY morning didn't stop parents and players turning up in their droves for this closely anticipated tie between Grange Lightning (wearing all black) and Beddington Cyclones (green).

Grange Lightning started fast, pushing the Cyclones back into their own box. The deep defending provided a strong barrier, not allowing any attempts on

goal. Through long throw-ins by Mario Ghiuzan, the Cyclones progressed up the pitch without causing any trouble.

A bit of pin ball opened the space for a shot by Sam Hunter-Brook, which was blocked by Rares Dumea for a corner.

Long throw-ins by the Cyclones seemed to be the order of the day, releasing Lewis Grantham through on goal. But for a fine save by Finn Roberts, the Cyclones would have taken the lead.

Arlo Salah made a few bursting runs from deep only to be matched by Grange Lightning defender Kaycie Stevens.

A cross-cum-shot by Momin Abubakar following an Arlo Salah corner fell into the path of Lewis Grantham but the finish was just wide of the post.

Lewis was in the action again when a misplaced clearance from the Grange goalkeeper landed at his feet, leaving a gaping goal only for Grange defender Harry

Humphreys to block the shot.

The second half started much the same as the first, with the ball spending most of its time in the middle of the field. The reintroduction of Callum Hams from the bench gave Grange Lightning a bit more attacking impetus.

Not too many clear-cut chances to report in the second half but the effort shown by every player was unrivalled. The game finished 0-0 but what an entertaining 0-0 it was.

## Blues sink to latest defeat

By Tim Harrison

A GRIM-FACED Todd Boehly sat in his padded VIP seat at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium last weekend, watching another Chelsea defeat and wondering just how much more his syndicate are expected to shell out to achieve a win. The Blues host Leeds at the Bridge on Saturday, with the club's new American owners as baffled about Chelsea's dip in form as the fans.

In the team jigsaw, a key piece is missing until the arrival of striker Chris Nkunku this summer. Meanwhile, the Blues are stagnating, with the rest of the players so goal-shy it's becoming embarrassing.

Supporters used to crow about visiting Three Point Lane when they travelled to Tottenham. Not any longer.

Harry Kane and Olly Skipp ensured Spurs' win, with Chelsea lucky to finish with 11 men on the field after VAR somehow overruled itself to reduce a red card to a yellow when Hakim Ziyech appeared to throw a punch in an exchange of handbags during a tetchy derby.

Thank goodness, then, for Chelsea Women, who powered ahead in the FA Cup at Kingsmeadow with a fifth-round win over Arsenal, the goals coming from Sam Kerr and Sophie Ingle.

The girls play the Gunners again this weekend at Selhurst Park in the Conti Cup final, so they're still in with a shout of four trophies this season.