

Smith steers Surrey back to the summit

By RICHARD SPILLER

POWERFUL Surrey crushed Warwickshire as they returned to the summit of LV County Championship Division One.

Victory by nine wickets at Edgbaston, in under three days, made it two wins out of three in a convincing start to their bid to retain the title, with Jamie Smith's superb 88 the cornerstone of their victory.

Champions in 2021, Warwickshire had gone into the match as early leaders but were dismissed for 150 as Surrey took advantage of winning the toss on a weather-hit first day. Spearheads Dan Worrall (4-38) and Kemar Roach (3-33) led the way, Dan Mousley's 55 forming the main resistance.

Batting was seldom straightforward at any stage of the match on a two-paced pitch, skipper Rory Burns (32), Ryan Patel (27) and Ben Foakes (39) having to labour hard for their runs.

At 175-6, the prospects of a substantial lead were disappearing but Smith garnered support from the tail so successfully that they added another 106 runs for the final four wickets.

Smith, who impressed for England Lions last winter with a powerful century in Sri Lanka against Galle, underlined why many observers feel he could soon be making an entry to Test level. The 22-year-old was overshadowed by tailender Worrall crunching a speedy 35 before switching on the afterburns, lifting Surrey to 281 all out, and Warwickshire soon subsided to 22-4.

West Indies speedster Roach had claimed a five-wicket haul against the Bears last year and this time claimed 5-34, Worrall's 3-55 seeing the hosts finished off for just 141. The 11 runs needed to complete victory being knocked off in



Jamie Smith in action for Surrey against Warwickshire

two overs.

Surrey's head coach Gareth Batty praised his side, explaining: "I thought we applied ourselves quite brilliantly and to get that sizeable lead made the difference in terms of the momentum shift.

Then Kemar was dynamite, again with Dan Worrall.

"They are highly skilled, highly intelligent and with the experience to back it up – they complement each other perfectly." And on Smith, he added: "His innings

was superb – it's not his highest score by any stretch but it's the best I've seen him play. Against a very strong attack in difficult conditions, for him to play with the maturity he showed showed just how good a player he is."

Long Ditton put faith in ex-junior Imy

LONG Ditton Cricket Club have made history by appointing a female captain to lead one of their senior league teams this season.

Twenty-two-year-old former Surrey junior skipper Imy Neely takes charge of the club's second team as it competes in the Shepherd Neame 2nd XI County League.

Her appointment is in line with the club's policy of developing young talent to feed senior teams.

Imy, along with newly appointed first team captain Matt Baker and Sunday skipper Alex Naylor, all learned cricket

By IAIN CARTER

by playing for Long Ditton's junior teams.

"It means we've all stayed here since we were colts. It is very promising for our colts' development," Imy said. "It means we are always trying to push our young players through into our league sides.

"I first started playing at Stokes Field as an eight-year-old."

Imy quickly caught the eye of Surrey talent spotters and spent ten years leading the county's female junior sides.

"I got a break from cricket when I went

to university in France, so that came at a good time," Imy said. "But I love the game so much and I'm so proud of Long Ditton. I can't wait for the league season to start."

From the age of 11, Imy took charge of successful Long Ditton colts teams and is used to being the lone woman in the team. At a recent Surrey captains meeting, she was the only female in the room.

"I felt very outnumbered but luckily I had former twos captain Ollie Carter with me, which helped my confidence a lot because it could be quite overwhelming turning up and everyone assuming

you're not the captain there.

"So I'm glad I have the support of Long Ditton," she added.

"I think it's a bit crazy that I first started playing adult men's cricket aged 14 and I feel quite proud to represent Long Ditton in that way. I'm really excited we've got all young captains, people I've grown up with over the years.

"The season to come is exciting. I started here and to end up in this role is really touching and I'm honoured to take on the position."

For details on all Long Ditton's teams, contact longdittoncricket@gmail.com.

Players get their reward

By PATRICK HUTCHISON



After a very successful season, the only way to end it would be with a presentation. Every child who participated walked away with an achievement

award. This is by no means just a complimentary gift, instead a trophy to reflect what they have all achieved after what was a miserable couple of years prior thanks to the pandemic.

Callum Hams and Harry Phillips walked away with a golden boot each after tying on 20 league goals apiece. This averages a goal every game. Not only are they great goalscorers but they are scorers of great goals.

The golden glove award went to Edward Mason. Edward has pulled off some jaw-dropping saves this season and played a major part in Beddington Park Blizzards winning the league and reaching the cup final.

Player of the season as voted for by each team went to Callum Hams. Callum showed great versatility throughout the season, helping to defend and attack, but it was his close control, speed and finishing that caught the eye. Remember the name.

The fair play award went to Henry Ruby (pictured). An ever-present in the Hackbridge Hurricanes team, Henry plays football the way it should be played – with respect and a smile. Never one to argue with the ref and is encouraging to all around him. A credit to Wallington Little League.

Our youngest volunteer and ambassador, Charley Hansen, also walked away with a goody bag for well, just being her. An enthusiastic, happy girl who is a great help pitchside.

Fans just want end to agony

By TIM HARRISON

Oh we do love to be beside the seaside. However, Chelsea's journey down to Bournemouth this weekend feels fraught with danger.

Supporters' morale has hit a season's low as the club goes from stagnation in the table into freefall.

Arguably, the only way is up when a new manager is appointed, but the fans are so disillusioned at present that each fresh defeat is met with a scattering of half-hearted boos, but mainly resigned shrugs.

The Blue Army desperately wants to get some pride back and see the goals fly in once again. Had it not been for Thomas Tuchel's early-season points, before he was sacked in favour of Graham Potter, Chelsea would be down among the dead men, scrapping for Premier League survival.

With Reece James out for the rest of the season, and a lack of confidence in the rest of the squad, the stands at Stamford Bridge are now filled with grim gallows humour.

Home fans actually join in the mocking chants of visiting supporters. They only have to wait until 6.15pm on Sunday, May 28, and the last kick of the home game against Newcastle, for the agony to end.

Corinthians hold testimonial for Danny



Danny Bracken

CORINTHIAN-CASUALS will celebrate a club legend this weekend when Danny Bracken's testimonial takes place at their United Business Group Stadium at King George's Field, Tolworth on Saturday, May 6.

Bracken made over 500 appearances for the club in more than a decade as their goalkeeper and captained the side for many of those games as well.

During his time with the Casuals, the team visited Brazil to play

By DOMINIC BLISS

against sibling club Corinthians Paulista in front of 30,000 fans in 2015, achieved promotion to the Isthmian Premier Division in 2018 and won the Corinthian Cup in Budapest as champions of the Egri Erbstein Tournament in 2019.

Saturday's testimonial will see a team of Corinthian Legends, managed by the club's director of

football Brian Adamson, take on a Casuals All Stars side, managed by James Bracken, who led the first team for seven years during his brother's time as goalkeeper.

"Ultimately, this is a celebration of one man's loyalty and one man's commitment to a club," said proud older brother James. "Anyone who's been involved in football knows what a commitment it is to be out there every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday."

"For him to play as consist-

ently as he did over that period is a life commitment, it takes over, and I hope he gets a good turnout.

"I hope that people from other clubs decide to come down and show their support too, because I'm pretty sure that everyone would love to have a Danny show that sort of loyalty to their club."

The game kicks off at 2.30pm and entry is £5, with a cut of the proceeds going to Danny's charity of choice, The Bobby Moore Fund for Cancer Research.