

It's a knockout! Star Foster plays lead role in glory bid

ICE COOL Ed Foster again showed his liking for the big occasion as he led from the front with a sublime innings to propel Shrewsbury to National Knockout glory.

Foster, who hit a ton to inspire Shropshire to victory in the MCCA KO final at Chester-le-Street last year, was at his brilliant best again as he ensured Shrewsbury got their hands on the biggest trophy in English club cricket for the second time.

Fittingly, his dad John, who helped Shrewsbury win the National KO at Lord's in 1983, was one of eight members of that legendary London Road team at Derbyshire's County Ground to see the class of 2011 join them in the club record books after a truly epic encounter.

Foster was unflappable as he carried his bat in style to fire Shrewsbury to an excellent victory with just two balls remaining of a nerve-jangling final over.

Chasing 221 for victory, Foster oozed class to compile a matchwinning, unbeaten 98 as he broke the hearts of Cambridge Granta, the East Anglian Premier League champions.

"It was a great day and it's a fantastic achievement," enthused Foster. "At one point, as we started to lose a few wickets, I was thinking if we don't win this I won't be able to speak to anybody for a long time as I would have felt responsible having batted for so long.

"I just couldn't get hold of the strike for the last two or three overs but it all came right in the end in the last over and it was a great feeling to hit the winning runs."

Foster insisted it was not a problem to have just missed out on compiling a century, stressing the team's success was far more important than any individual accolades.

"It would have been such a disappointment not to have won," he added.

"It was the least I could do after the season I've had as, compared to the last two years, I've not scored as many runs.

"I would have liked to

CRICKET by Stuart Dunn



have done better, but this helped make up for it."

Foster had earlier won the toss and put in Cambridge, who rattled up a competitive 220-8 from their 45 overs.

Alex Fullarton, at No 3, top scored with an unbeaten 87 and Craig Park, a Minor Counties regular for Cambridgeshire, added 45.

Paceman Mike Barnard was the pick of the Shrewsbury attack, claiming 2-21, while spinners Elliot Green (2-61) and Rob Foster (2-62) also enjoyed some success with the ball, but Foster admitted: "I don't think we bowled and fielded as well as we could."

Shrewsbury enjoyed a brisk start to their reply before Foster saw his inform opening partner Ryan Bishop, the hero of the semi-final triumph over star-studded West Indian Cavaliers, depart for 20.

Teenager Steve Leach quickly came and went for two before Foster was joined at the crease by Joe Leach,

the pair joining forces to put on 76 for the third wicket.

Leach hit the only six of the Shrewsbury innings before perishing for 26 and that brought together the Foster brothers with the outcome hanging in the balance.

Rob, Ed's younger brother and playing through the pain barrier, vindicated the decision to declare himself fit despite a recent hand injury by cracking a brisk 39 at better than a run-a-ball to keep Shrewsbury up with the asking rate.

Tom Cox added 23 and, together with skipper Foster, looked in the mood to see the county towners home until his departure threatened to undo all of Shrewsbury's hard work.

From 209-4 and with the finishing line in sight, they lost three wickets for just four runs with Cox quickly joined back in the pavilion by Alex Blofield and Steve Leach, both run out, as nerves understandably set in.

Cool heads were called for and skipper Foster duly obliged, taking all the pressure off the incoming batsman, 15-year-old Ed Barnard, by getting the job done with a flurry of boundaries to end 98 not out off 124 balls as he guided Shrewsbury to 224-7 to seal the most dramatic of wins.

"We had a couple of decent partnerships but it was a shame we didn't really kick on with them and take the full benefits of them," added Foster. "Joe and Tom both did well and Rob played a fantastic innings given the situation we were in by scoring quickly.

"It was a great day for all of us and there was a pitch invasion at the end from lots of our happy supporters who gave us great backing throughout," he added.



The thrilled Shrewsbury side pose with the National Knockout Trophy at Derby, back from left: Elliot Green, Steve Leach, Trevor Sheperd (manager), Mike Barnard, Alex Blofield, Tom Cox, Joe Leach, Rob Foster; front: Steve Barnard, Ed Foster, Ryan Bishop, Ed Barnard, Will Parton.

Pictures: Claire Green



Rob and Ed Foster, flanked by dad John, who played for Shrewsbury in their 1983 National KO triumph, and mum Jean celebrate the famous win.

Season fizzles out after party

CONSIDERING the celebrations of the night before, Shrewsbury produced another impressive display as they ran newly-crowned Birmingham League premier division champions Barnt Green close in their final league game of the season on Sunday.

Knowing they needed to win to snatch runners-up spot, Ed Foster, the hero of their National KO triumph, did his best to inspire his troops once more before the London Roaders fell short by 20 runs to end the season in fourth spot.

Barnt Green, successors to Shrewsbury's crown, batted first and rattled up 205-9, Richard Wilkinson top scoring with 65, with spinner Elliot Green taking 3-29 and youngster Ed Barnard grabbing 2-16.

Shrewsbury, in reply, were again well served by skipper Foster, who hit a fine 64 at the top of the order. There were also contributions from No 7 Stephen Barnard (34) and Aussie Paul Donaldson (20), at No 9, as the London Roaders were dismissed for 185 with 17 balls remaining.

Barnt Green's former Warwickshire star Dougie Brown, earlier bowled by Green for 29, was the pick of the home attack, taking 4-38 for the champions.

Meanwhile, SHREWSBURY II were denied the chance to end their Birmingham League premier reserve division season on a high note as their scheduled game with Old Hill, put back to Sunday to allow them to support the first team in the National KO final, was called off.



Ed Foster hits another boundary on his way to his match winning 98 not out in the National KO final.

Picture: Pete Dawson