

Foster's fledglings sparkle as Shrewsbury march into final

SUPER Shrewsbury's young guns sent West Indian Cavaliers' collection of big names crashing to defeat to roar through to the National KO final.

Ed Foster's men hit top form to overwhelm the Nottinghamshire Premier League high fliers by eight wickets in front of a bumper home crowd with an unbeaten 85 from opener Ryan Bishop leading the charge.

Shrewsbury, beaten semi finalists two years ago, now stand on the verge of emulating the club's classy 1983 side who were crowned National KO champs at Lord's.

"It was a great performance and roll on Derby," enthused proud captain Foster, beginning the countdown to the big final at Derbyshire County Cricket Club's headquarters on September 17. "There's still one game to go but it would be a massive achievement if we manage to win."

Cavaliers, who brought a big contingent of travelling supporters to London Road for Sunday's semi-final clash, included a host of star names on their team sheet, headed by ex-Pakistan international spinner Saqlain Mushtaq plus former England duo Usman Afzaal and Alex Tudor, the trio all former Surrey players.

But their big game experience proved no match for Shrewsbury who sent them packing with seven overs and eight wickets to spare to the delight of a 700 plus strong crowd.

Comprehensive

Foster admitted the victory was made all the more sweeter given the strength of the opposition, insisting: "It was especially nice to do it so comprehensively in front of a home crowd who had a very good day. It was brilliant.

"It was a very good game, the sun was out, they had some ex-Test players and we've come out on top."

Cavaliers batted first and were dismissed for 191 after being in commanding positions at 110-0 and then 135-1.

Opener Aaron Thomas top scored with 80 before being run out by Steve Barnard while visiting captain Afzaal was caught behind by Bishop off Rob Foster for 16.

Alex Blofield accounted for both Tudor and Mushtaq, for 16 and two respectively, in a stunning late burst from the spinner which yielded an excellent 4-10 from three overs.

Elliot Green, another of Shrewsbury's spinners, also bowled well for 3-40 as Cavaliers spectacularly lost their way.

"It was a very good pitch with a quick outfield and you probably could have got 300 on there," said Foster. "But we did brilliantly to peg it back.

"Everyone bowled well but the spinners took the wickets and Alex coming on at the end to nip a few out stopped them getting up to where they might have wanted to be."

Shrewsbury, in reply, enjoyed a brisk start before skipper Foster perished for 12, but that only served to bring together Bishop and No 3 Steve Leach and they put on 115 for the second wicket.

Seventeen-year-old prospect Leach finally went for 53 from 80 balls, falling victim to Mushtaq, and that paved the way for his elder brother Joe (24no) to see the job through with star man Bishop as Shrewsbury eased to 193-2.

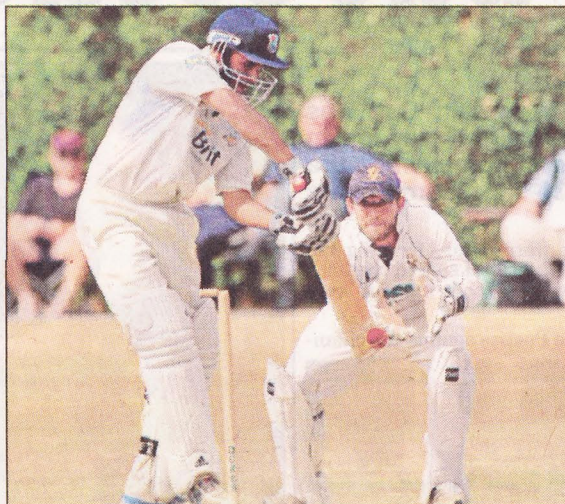
Bishop, the diminutive opener, faced 95 balls for his unbeaten 85, carrying his bat and cracking 10 boundaries during a batting masterclass which left the visiting star names deflated.

Stuart Dunn reports on a memorable day for Shrewsbury Cricket Club



We'll drink to that - Shrewsbury players and manager Trevor Sheperd celebrate.

Pictures: Tom Somerville



Shrewsbury wicketkeeper Ryan Bishop gets a close up view of the action as Aquib Afzaal tries to force the pace



Former Pakistan ace Saqlain Mushtaq heads back to the dressing room