

# NICK COMPTON

## YES, THE CHAMPIONSHIP IS STILL FOUR-MIDABLE!

A lot of people may think t20 hauls in the large crowds and sells the hot dogs but our game against First Division leaders Warwickshire this weekend was as good an advert for four-day cricket as you could hope to find.

Coming out to bat on that last day needing 280 on a particularly dry and worn fourth day wicket at Taunton, I wasn't particularly hopeful.

Having been bowled out for 250 in the first innings by Jeetan Patel, who had ripped through us with big turning off-breaks and taken seven wickets, it was only going to get tougher.

The wicket certainly wasn't getting any better and the large, rough patch created by Keith Barker, their wily left-arm seamer, made it a challenging prospect.

It was an extraordinary game of cricket, though, and one I'll certainly remember (pages 10-11). Warwickshire posted a fairly hefty 400 in the first innings, and we managed to claw our way to 250 just avoiding the follow-on.

We then managed to bowl them out, somewhat surprisingly, for just over a 100. Momentum was in our favour but we were under no illusions it was going to be anything other than a tough task.

The Somerset way, especially at Taunton, is to be positive and not waste any time. Especially when facing small totals you can get caught up in the 'being sensible' mindset which sometimes has the adverse effect of going nowhere while losing wickets.

This chase was a strange mixture because the Warwickshire attack has been successful this year and it wasn't going to be a simple case of knocking off the deficit.

The wicket wasn't too dissimilar to my experiences of playing in the subcontinent and it was hard to believe we'd had three months of flood warning rainfall.

We have some fond memories of chasing some hefty targets over the years. My mind did hark back to the time Somerset chased 479 on the last day against Yorkshire, but something told you this wasn't going to be the same hard hitting, swashbuckling victory. Nous, discipline and timing was going to be required.



**Fist pump:** Somerset's Peter Trego, right, celebrates hitting the winning runs with Gemaal Hussain

PICTURE: Pinnacle

### By the time Trego clipped the winning runs, Taunton had turned into a nervous wreck

Step up Craig Kieswetter for his 152 in what was one of the better knocks I've witnessed in a Championship match.

We lost three early wickets and when he strode out to join me at the crease we were staring down the barrel.

Taunts of getting back to Birmingham and watching the last round of The Open were heard from the fielders and fans, but I knew it was a case of hanging around and

taking this one deep. In what was just pure, crisp striking and calculated batting Kieswetter found the boundary regularly and it was good fun working out a way of diminishing Jeetan's off-spinning threat. I often found myself standing past off stump and working the ball legside, such was the turn and bounce.

We set small targets and goals and knew if we were still there with an hour left we could, with wickets in hand, have a serious bash at the target given we had Jos Buttler and Peter Trego in the ranks.

However, it was all too much to bear at the end with only 12 runs needed we had managed to lose nine wickets.

By the time Tregs (Peter Trego) clipped a two through the legside to pull off a great one-wicket victory, Taunton had turned into a nervous wreck with Kieswetter and I unable to watch.

THE First Division race in the County Championship is wide open and I just hope it's going to be a close finish like last year.

We saw Lancashire celebrate a first outright title in 77 years after an amazing end to the season at Taunton and I'd love that to be us this time.

Now that the summer, yes the summer, seems to have finally arrived the pitches and conditions will change and make for some interesting cricket.

Anyone of four or five teams will really fancy winning the title so it should make for a fascinating couple of months.

Hopefully this recent weekend will be an example of things to come.

There have been some great results with Worcestershire beating Lancashire (page 13) and Sussex holding off Durham (page 14) in another thriller.

## IT'S GREAT TO SEE MARCUS IS STILL SO HUNGRY ...

SO from one great victory it was a further boost to have Marcus Trescothick back at the helm, leading the troops out in our CB40 game against Durham the next day.

After a long lay-off, the Tres factor has been sorely missed. His batting aside just having him on the team sheet puts fear into the opposition and it was no different as we comfortably turned over Durham.

Seeing Marcus back in his playing kit, it was like watching a big kid wake up on

Christmas morning. As you could see months of frustration and desire flooding back, Tres was buzzing to get back out on the pitch with his pads on.

He was first into training and straight out for the first pre-match preparations.

This was followed by a gym session focusing on the upper body (so he says although we think it's so that he can indulge in the low-fat bread and butter pudding at lunch) and then to get the

ankle strapped and all this before the rest of the team had even turned up.

A true professional and more hungry than ever, excuse the pun, captain.

"It's been frustrating being away so long, but you have to get the balance right, you can't push too hard and this was the right time," Tres told me. "I'm ready. We've a lot to play for in all competitions and we can still push hard for a trophy or two."

I was going to ask what he'd been up to

but thought it was more apt to ask his wife Hayley who rolled her eyes and said with wry smile: "It was like having another kid in the house."

Walking out into the field with him again you could feel the buzz around the place lift to another level. Having that little bit of extra energy and someone so well respected by all of us was a huge boost.

Our one-day cricket was back to its best!

### DISABLED

## MATTHEWS HELPS PIP YORKS IN RACE FOR THE SEMIS

By Steve Moore

YORKSHIRE'S Incredible squad will be blaming their Red Rose rivals in Lancashire for preventing them from reaching the semi-finals by the margin of just two points.

Division winners Lancashire fell to Derbyshire in the final game in a tense encounter that allowed Derbyshire to jump ahead of Yorkshire and into the semis.

Batting first in a game they knew they had to win, Derbyshire's Scott Matthews led the charge with 56 as they reached the tidy total of 152-8 off their 40 overs.

Yorkshire's Nigel Robinson was the pick of the bowlers with 5-26, without which, an even more imposing target would have been set for the chase.

Zac Green intelligently pieced together his own knock of 52 in reply as Yorkshire wickets fell around him, but Derbyshire were able to bowl them all out just nine short of the target with eight balls left.

The semi-final place that Derby secured will likely be against Somerset after they gained qualification from the south with a convincing victory over Hertfordshire.

England international, Kieran Cousins hit a glorious century as Somerset reached 216-3 off their 40 overs, with support from Jon Tucker.

Then opening bowler Nick Dean took over and reduced Hertfordshire to 21-6. However, Amanjit Singh hit a half century to help Herts get past the 100 mark and grab three crucial batting bonus points as a result.

Somerset, therefore, have only to avoid defeat against bottom side Dorset to win the group and set up a repeat of last year's semi-final with a chance of revenge against Derbyshire.

But, those bonus points mean that Hertfordshire need only three more next week to reach the knockout stages themselves for the first time in the county's history.