

BIRSTALL MISS COUNCIL FINAL BY SIX RUNS

1957

Birstall lost the semi-final of the Yorkshire Council Championship against Pontefract by six runs.

It was a most aggravating loss to the Central Yorkshire League side. First, E. Blakeley, probably the best match winning bowler in the district, did not play, because of holidays. Second, Lester, who acted as a deputy stumper (vice Riley) in the Saturday afternoon's play, did not appear on the Pontefract ground for the Monday's four p.m. resumption of play, and thus Birstall batted ten men only.

The opinion has been expressed that had Blakeley been playing, and especially had he met with some early success, he might have "run through" the Pontefract side. Pontefract have not met him or his like this season. Handicapped by the absence of such a player, Birstall did exceedingly well in suffering defeat by six runs only.

Why Lester failed to appear on Monday has not been disclosed.

FINE START

Haley and Fox gave Birstall a fine start of 50 for none. Then Fox (18) went. Howden, with 23 carried on the good work, but at 85 for four, both he and Haley, top scorer with (33), had been dismissed. Then Kershaw and Smith (W.B.) added another useful 28, until the former at a crucial stage—with 15 minutes to go to suspension time—was unfortunately run out for 15. At 123 for five, Birstall innings were suspended after three hours' batting.

Watson with a score of 58 and Crofts, 35, gave Pontefract even a better send-off than that of their opponents. At 61, Crofts was cleaned bowled by Fox. Watson batted a patient innings, and was indefatigable in his "gardening" of the pitch.

At the close of Saturday's play Pontefract were 116 for four.

On Monday's re-start there was an unusual episode. Only one of Saturday's not out batsmen appeared at the crease, the other one being a new man in. Birstall pointed this out, and drew attention to the Law of Cricket which laid down a two-minute interval only after the dismissal of a batsman and the coming in of the next one. If the second not out batsman did not continue his innings immediately, should they not be regarded as over?

ONLY 22 RUNS FOR SEVEN WICKETS

The question was not answered precisely, but the new batsman retired to the pavilion, and presently out came the correct player.

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Pontefract passed Birstall's score with five wickets. The latter's captain said "Bat on." It was a wise move, for the last seven men scored only 22 runs in all.

Birstall resumed, needing 27 runs for victory. Smith (W.B.) was out at once for 19, and the captain Sugden, who scored 16, could find no one to stay with him sufficiently long to bring victory.

Womersley and Fox bore the heavy brunt of Birstall's bowling, the former taking five wickets for 55, and Fox five for 40. Haley's first catch at silly mid-on to dismiss Cairns was a beauty, calling for decided courage, quick eyes and safe hands.

The match was a rather sad ending to Birstall's fine season.

BIRSTALL

K Haley b Watson	33
C Fox b Walker	18
J Howden lbw b Pritchard	28
H Lyles b Farrer	1
D Kershaw run out	15
W B Smith b Walker	19
H Sugden not out	16
H Smith b Walker	0
J Wood c and b Walker	6
M Womersley b Pritchard	0
Extras	7
Total	143

PONTEFRACT

S Watson b Fox	58
B Crofts b Fox	35
J Whitehead b Fox	10
D Cairns c Haley b Womersley	15
B Hall lbw b Womersley	1
D Hill b Fox	6
B Farrer b Womersley	1
B Walker b Womersley	7
J Rhodes b Fox	5
J Pell not out	1
E Pritchard c Haley b Womersley	1
Extras	9
Total	149