

Streat & Westmeston v Sussex Martlets Over 40s, Wednesday 20 May 2026

“It’s a funny kind of month, October.
For the really keen cricket fan, it’s when you realise
that your wife left you in May.”

Dennis Norden

And so began the season proper for the Sussex Martlets Over 40s...

Four of the side had represented the seniors earlier in the month on the Cambridge tour. But the remainder were donning the blues and pinks for the first time this season; indeed, we had a brace of debutants among our ranks.

Nestled in the South Downs, with Ditchling Beacon looming large in the distance, Streat & Westmeston’s ground was a suitably charming venue for this opening fixture. The rolling mist that greeted the early arrivals soon dissipated. Likewise three errant sheep, who were shooed away from the cow corner outfield by the home groundsman, before the game commenced.



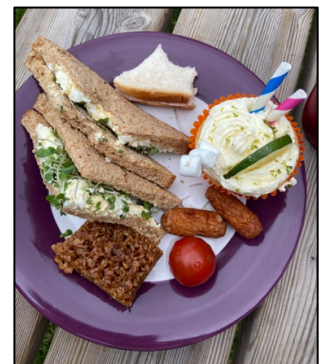
Upon winning the toss, the Martlets batted first. Having damaged his under-carriage in Cambridge (*what goes on tour, stays on tour*), Willy Boulter had left his Morgan at home, so was keen to take fresh air from the crease rather than the road. His opening partner Toby Chasseaud was making his debut for the Over 40s, having first played alongside Deggsy many, many years prior. (One imagines Deggsy’s little black book to be the analogue version of an infinitely scrollable contacts list... most of whom, it seems, may be heading to Lewes in September!)



Early runs were at a premium for the Martlets, with both openers departing relatively cheaply, and the scoreboard creeping to 28-2 from 14 overs. Stuart Ritchie (31) and skipper Steve Lovell then pushed the tempo a little, with a 4th wicket partnership of 50 runs from 79 balls. This momentum continued with the middle order all contributing: Lovell finishing with 37, Alan Leeks 28 and Phil Savage 25, with seven, five and five boundaries respectively.

Closing just shy of the allotted 42 overs, the Martlets went to the break having amassed 147; a below-maximum total that could potentially see the visitors requiring snookers...

Cue the captain's deployment of his secret weapon at the tea interval... home-made gin and tonic cupcakes! These boozy treats were dispatched to both sides, in the hope that the judgement of the hosts might be impaired, come their reply.



However, Streat's opener Dominic Fifield was seemingly unaffected by the moonshine confectionery and wasted no time in going on the offensive. By the time he retired on 50 not out, he'd clattered ten boundaries from just 38 balls. Andrew Cantrell and Deggsy had bowled with control, but Fifield had simply countered with admirable positivity.

A change in the bowling attack brought some success. The evergreen Jeremy McGahan slowed the pace and tempted the edge; safely taken by Savage standing up (the first of two identical dismissals).

Debutant Roger Smith also controlled the flight and drift of his deliveries, and claimed his maiden Martlets wicket. The wily Dave Christmas, sensing that the batsman was looking to launch over mid-on moved himself back 15 yards... and safely pouched a skier the very next ball.

Despite Christmas's own Scrooge-like miserliness with the ball, and an economy rate of under two from his overs, the early damage inflicted by Fifield proved pivotal. The home team reached their victory target for the loss of four wickets, and with five overs to spare.

Our second team photo of the day was taken at stumps, as Jeremy had somehow missed the original sitting. Fortuitously, the weather had held fair throughout and the Middleton Manor ground was now draped in dappled sunshine. Thanks were duly given to our hospitable hosts, to Keith Walder for umpiring and Richard Prokopowicz for scoring.



The Martlets retired to the White Horse in Ditchling, for some well-deserved Harvey's and surely the finest triple-cooked chips in the county. In summary, despite the result, it had been a thoroughly enjoyable day out with a match played in a suitably friendly spirit...

“There ought to be some other means of reckoning quality in this best and loveliest of games; the scoreboard is an ass.”

Sir Neville Cardus