

Bowdon Vale Cricket Club Match Reports - 2011

Saturday 18th September:

1st XI: v Alderley Park away. APCC 127-5. BVCC 3-0. Match abandoned.

The final game of the season was effectively a non-event since the outcome of the match had no consequence & the weather destroyed any possibility of completing the game. Maybe this accounts for the total lack of ability to write the scores in the scorebook to any degree of accuracy. Note that Bowdon Vale officially had 3 runs on the board when the match was abandoned yet the scorebook shows a fully completed innings for the Vale, as usual skittled for 70 (so maybe there was some level of accuracy there after all). The scorebook also shows that Alderley Park did not bat, even though reality records them totalling 127-5 in a reduced overs match, Damien Paul taking his first 2 wickets for the 1st XI. We eagerly await the return of John Roylance next season to bring some level of normality to the ancient art of scoring.

2nd XI: versus Alderley Park at home. APCC 219-6. BVCC 87-10. BVCC lost by 132 runs.

At least the scorebook was accurate in this rain-affected match although the numbers were a little one-sided. Batting first, the visitors lost opener Madeley retired hurt but cruised to 132-2 off 30 overs. A. Ramamurith was the chief architect of the innings scoring an unbeaten 113 albeit aided by some generous Vale fielding. Ian Wilson finished with 2-72, Paresh Solanki with 2-56 & Bill Crowson 32-38 as Alderley Park finished on 219-5 off their allotted 45 overs. In reply, only Paresh Solanki (26) put up any real resistance as the Vale collapsed to 87 all out, A.Ramamurith returning figures of 3-0-3-4 to cap off an excellent all-round performance from him.

On the subject of excellent all-round performances, all players are indebted to Harry Wood for his continued magnificent work on the ground and to Sharon Ryan & her helpers for the top-class teas. Thanks on behalf of all the players!!

Saturday 10th September:

1st XI: v Pott Shrigley away. PSCC 99-10. BVCC 95-10. BVCC lost by 4 runs.

The Vale's fate was sealed against Pott Shrigley as they were relegated to the Cheshire Cricket Alliance League after a 4 run defeat at Pott Shrigley. Alderley Park notched up 20 points in their win against Disley whereas Vale could only muster 5 points to make the final game of the season a dead rubber. There was hope a-plenty at the end of the first half as the Vale reduced the home side to 99 all out, from 77-9. Unbeknown to the Vale, the last stand of 22 runs was to be their nemesis. Nigel Halsall (5-43) & skipper Steve Barrett (5-48) shared the wickets between themselves. With 50 overs available to score 100 to win, you would have thought the odds would favour the Vale, especially with Noman Hasan's knock of 33. However the remaining batsmen, with the exception of Nigel Halsall (13), failed to muster the 54 runs required to win. A. Davies (4-24) & M. Jackson (4-43) delivered the results for Pott Shrigley. Even at 80-9 (a similar position to the home side), there was a chance of winning but like so many times this season, the Vale snatched defeat from the jaws of victory.

2nd XI: versus Pott Shrigley at home. PSCC 190-8. BVCC 119-9. BVCC lost by 71 runs.

The Vale 2nd XI made a brave attempt to salvage a result from the game against Pott Shrigley at Priory Street. Youngsters Cameron Edge & Pat Mullen survived 6 overs for the last wicket which fell in the final over to a high full toss. With only 10 batsmen available (skipper Williamson making an unplanned trip to Altrincham General after his delivering master class in "How not to Catch"), Colin Smith (15) & Alex Power (13) batted well to get the Vale off to steady start. Jack Ryan held the Vale innings together with 46 valuable runs as the opposition bowlers A.Farrer (5-52) & R.Lee 3-21 did the damage. Earlier in the day, luck had gone against Vale in the field as P.Beard crashed a charmed 76 & R. Lisney followed with 33. Graeme Stacey had the most success with the ball returning 4-46 & Ian Willson (2-75) & Pat Mullen deserved much more for their efforts.

Saturday 3rd September:

1st XI: v Cheadle Hulme LB at home. BVCC 94-10. CHLB 95-3. BVCC lost by 7 wickets
With 2 games to go before the end of the season, the Vale props up the table with 187 points, 22 points behind Alderley Park who they play in the last game & 57 points behind The Groves who the Vale lost to last week. Saturday's result did nothing to ease the situation with Vale collapsing to 94 all out in 29 overs, only Jack Halsall (48) & Noman Hasan (13) really troubling the scorers, the rest scoring only 34 between themselves. M.Bishop was the chief destroyer returning 5-11 off only 4 overs. In reply, opener S.Clark (33*) carried his bat as the visitors knocked off the required total in 23 overs, with Nigel Halsall the only successful bowler taking 3-31. The next 2 games are critical - as Queen Victoria said, "we are not interested in the possibilities of defeat; they do not exist".

2nd XI: versus Aston away. BVCC 96-10. ACC 97-2. BVCC lost by 8 wickets.

Frustratingly, Vale returned from the 75 mile round trip to Aston with a solitary point, the amount of time taken travelling exceeding the duration of the Vale innings. Vale made a solid but slow start scoring 34-2 off 17 overs against the naggingly accurate bowling of Potts & Hall. Danny Conroy played well for a bright 25 & at 82-5 off 35 overs and it seemed that a total of 130 was in sight. However, the late order had not read the script & the Vale tumbled to 96 all out in 40 overs, spinner David returning 3-13. A confident team talk by Alex Power in the interval rallied the Vale spirit as they reduced the home side to 17-2 off 6 overs. However, the combination of too many 4-balls, too many wides, a small total to chase and a shed-load of chips & donuts for tea, meant that the home side cruised to victory in 21 overs.

Saturday 27th August:

1st XI: versus The Groves away. TGCC 127-10. BVCC 120-10. BVCC lost by 7 runs.

Albert Einstein once said "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts". And so it was with Saturday's scorebook completed by the opposition which makes a posthumous match report difficult to write. Start of play was delayed until 16.20, which was just as well given the state of Vale's transport arrangements. The Vale inserted the home side & bowled them out for 127 in 27 overs, Nigel Halsall taking 4-54 off his 13 unchanged overs. Steve Barratt took 3-35 & a screaming catch to dismiss M. Garvey (20) & then opened the batting scoring 25. Unfortunately it was like the rest of the team were still walking to the ground as the Vale failed to capitalize on a 50 plus start, engineered 2 run outs & fell 7 runs short of the required total. Three games to go & all to play for.

2nd XI: versus The Groves at home. No play - Rain.

Saturday 20th August:

1st XI: versus Chester CO at home. BCC 162-8. CCOCC 163-2. BVCC lost by 8 wickets.

The Vale came off second best in a top versus bottom of the table clash at Priory Street. At 69-5 off the first 30 overs, the home side looked in deep trouble despite 31 from Jack Halsall. Steve Barratt (41) & Noman Hasan (50) took the score to 126-6 off 40 overs & then kicked on to reach 162 for the loss of 8 wickets. Opposition opening bowler S.Johnson bowled unchanged to return 22-8-55-5. In reply, Chester made a circumspect start scoring only 33 runs off the first 10 overs & 78 off the first 20 overs for the loss of 2 wickets to Nigel Halsall (2-35). Opener M.Rowlands (83*) who proved to be the Vale nemesis in the first game earlier in the season, led the attack & was well supported by C.Wright (59*) as the visitors reached their target with 14 overs to spare. This leaves the Vale on 179 points, 20 points behind Alderley Park who they play last game of the season & 37 points behind next weeks' opponents The Groves.

2nd XI: versus Kingsley away. BVCC 207-6. KCC 208-7. BVCC lost by 3 wickets.

After last weeks' debacle, the Vale made a spirited comeback to be pipped at the post in a thrilling, high-scoring encounter against top of the table Kingsley. Losing the toss & batting first, the Vale looked in trouble at 19-2 but Karthic Umesh (76) & Dave Gould (76) batted sensibly to steady the ship & then accelerated well to reach the 90 off 30 target, recording a partnership of 115 with some clever hitting off a steady Kingsley bowling attack. Syed Hussein, Jack Ryan & Alex Power all chipped in useful runs & Damo Paul achieved his own personal nelson (one eye, one ball, one run). Two breaks for rain meant that 4 overs were lost from the game, leaving the home side 41 overs to reach their target. The pace attack of Ian Willson, Syed Hussein & Karthic Umesh caused the Kingsley batsmen trouble but the wickets failed to materialise as opener L.Tasker (58) held the innings together. C.Begg (39) & J.Holmes (32) farmed the slower bowlers & put Kingsley up with the run rate. Karthic Umesh (5-55) returned to the attack to take 2 wickets in 1 over to leave the Vale with some hope but the short boundary & in-form opposition batsmen saw Kingsley across the line with 4 balls to spare. The Vale returned home with a well-dererved 14 points.

Saturday 13th August:

1st XI: versus Bunbury away. BCC 170-6. BVCC 171-9. BVCC won by 1 wicket.

A superb team effort saw the Vale take the honours in a clash with high-flying Bunbury. The Vale attack bowled well, restricting the home side to 53-2 off the first 20 overs & 86-3 off 30.

Skipper Steve Barrett was pick of the bowlers with 2-10 but all chimed in to restrict Bunbury to 170-6 off their allotted 45 overs. In reply, the Vale matched the first innings scoring rate with 52-2 off 20 & 86-5 off 30, albeit losing more wickets. All the batsmen contributed such that at the 40 over mark the game hung in the balance. Nigel Halsall (20) & Steve Barrett (41) steadied the ship to reach 157-7, leaving 14 to win off the last 5. The next 2 overs saw only 2 runs scored but the Vale batsmen chipped away until Gareth Roberts (8*) & Rick Allan (4*) needed 4 off the last over. Needing 1 to win off the last ball they scampered a single, narrowly avoiding a run out to take a much needed & deserved 25 points back home to the Vale.

2nd XI: versus Bunbury at home. BCC 209-4. BVCC 66-10. BVCC lost by 143 runs.

The only thing the Vale won all day was the toss as Bunbury completely dominated the game on a damp wicket at Priory Street. The Bunbury openers made a solid start to reach 35-1, Danny Conroy (1-20) bowling well to remove one of the openers. Paresh Solanki chipped in with 2-19 & Bill Crowson 1-20 but none of the bowlers were able to tame opposition skipper Chapman who reached his unbeaten 100 in the last over. The Vale innings got off to a poor start as they slumped to 4-2 off 3 overs, made a slight recovery to 30-3 (Williamson 31) but then succumbed to a series of poor shots to lose wickets at regular intervals, the last 5 wickets falling for 9 runs. Harris was pick of the opposition attack returning 5-23 of 13 overs as the game finished in the 27th over.

Saturday 6th August:

1st XI: versus Disley at home. BVCC 90-10. DCC 93-0. BVCC lost by 10 wickets.

This roving reporter arrived at Priory Street at 5pm camera & notebook in hand with great expectations of catching the game at its height & snapping a few action shots. Sadly the all too familiar 5pm picture of the Vale said it all. Nice square Harry!



The only thing the Vale won all day was the toss as they were dismissed within 26 overs, roughly 95 minutes. Only Tom Robinson (24) provided any real resistance as 7 batsmen were caught off

the bat. J.Reynolds (3-22) & J. Banner (4-22 off 3.3 overs) were the chief destroyers. Disley knocked off the required runs without loss in 23 overs with A.Clarke unbeaten on 67.

2nd XI: versus Disley away. No Play - Rain.

Wednesday 3rd August:

Over 40's: versus Cheadle away. CCC 109-7. BVCC 106-10. BVCC lost by 3 runs. Cheadle batted first & Bob Hutton & Lee Bowyer opened the bowling for the Vikings. Lee struggled with his line & Bob, uncharacteristically, conceded 3 boundaries in his early overs. After 5 overs the home team were 33-0. Bob cleaned bowled Rasheed & Neil came on to bowl a couple of overs, but had to finish his spell early due to a shoulder injury. Oldfield, dropped by Lee from a difficult return catch in the opening over of the match, batted well & retired at 30. After 10 overs last week's conquerors of Urmston were well placed at 62-1. Pete Shakespeare & Mark Nicholas then bowled in tandem & began a fight back from the visitors. Shakey bowled Hall who unluckily dragged the ball onto his boot & saw it trickle into his off stump, just dislodging the bail. Mark got two wickets with a catch from skipper Pete Thorpe & a stumping by Gareth Roberts to finish with figures of 4-0-16-2. In Shakey's fourth & last over another drag on & a clean bowled gave him a season's best performance of 4-0-15-3. Rod Howell bowled a tidy pair of overs at the death, including another clean bowled, & 109-7 after 20 overs set a gettable target. Gary Webb nicked one to the keeper for a rare failure and Mark, coming in at number 3, & Pete Thorpe struggled to take the attack to the home team. After seven overs 19-1 was well behind the asking rate. Tony "if you know someone who can bowl slower than me I'd like to meet him" Brady suckered Pete into a return catch & cousin Dave, trying to hit his second ball for 6, was out for a duck caught on the mid wicket boundary off the same bowler. Mark started finding the middle of the bat, hitting Brady for 6, but was caught trying to repeat the stroke after getting to 20. Gareth suffered the same fate after getting a quick 10. Lee Bowyer then came in & saved his best batting of the season for the last game. He hit a neat leg glance for four but was out after contributing a very useful 14 to the total. Neil was also batting well, hitting 3 boundaries including a 6 that mid wicket got his fingertips to, but could not prevent from clearing the ropes. Shakey joined Neil after Graham Stacey's departure & with 2 overs and 2 wickets left at 103-8 seven were needed to win. Shakey faced the 19th over, but only 1 run resulted from it, an over waist height no ball that controversially hit the top of the stumps. Neil top edged the first ball of the last over to the keeper. Shakey and Bob Hutton managed a single each but the home hero against Cheadle couldn't repeat his achievement & was bowled off the last ball of the season trying to hit the winning boundary. That's enough close encounters for one season. Now all join in with "We're all going on a summer holiday ..."

Saturday 30th July:

1st XI: versus Sandbach away. BVCC 191-8. SCC 192-6. BVCC lost by 4 wickets. The 1st XI travelled down the M6 to title contenders Sandbach. On a glorious afternoon and a 'shirt front' with a lightning fast outfield, the Vale were asked to bat first. The Vale were off to a brisk start as Simon Hopton (26) and Jack Halsall posted an opening partnership of 45. Halsall went on to complete a fine half century before falling for 51. Contributions from John Ryan 42 not out and Gareth Roberts 33 enabled the Vale to post what looked like a competitive total of 191 at the close of 45 overs. In reply the home side were in trouble at 88-4 and the game finely balanced, after an impressive spell from debutant Danish Hashri, which accounted for the Sandbach top order. At drinks the Vale were well in the game, however a classy 81 from Mulhotra with support from J.Kara 55 not out, took the game away from the Vale. Jack Halsall was the most successful bowler with 2-57. This was a much improved all round performance by the team which augers well for the challenges ahead as the Vale bid to move away from the lower reaches of the Division 3 table.

2nd XI: versus Sandbach at home. SCC 204-7. BVCC 205-6. BVCC won by 4 wickets.

A change of 2nd XI leadership, with Mark Nicholas skippering the side, brought the 2nd XI their first 25 point haul of the season. On another '400 plus' track at Priory Street, the visitors posted 204-7, with 15 year old Danny Conroy 2-46 and Amish Aponu 2-25 the pick of the Vale bowling. Credit however to Nicholas and Kartic Umesh for tight middle order spells to restrict the Sandbach total. In reply the Vale paced their response with Dominic Turner 21 dropping anchor early on. Howard Chislett with a classy 66 before being run out kept the Vale up with the clock. Kartic Umesh with 49 and Amish Aponu 29 kept the impetus going as the Vale closed in on their victory target. However the highlight of the Vale innings was a mature 17 not out from 15 year old Alex Power, Alex bringing up the winning boundary with a classic pull through mid wicket with 2 overs remaining, to secure the Vale 25 points.

Wednesday 27th July:

Over 40's: versus Sale at home. BVCC 115-10. SCC 104-10. BVCC won by 11 runs.

After a poor run of results the Vikings came to this game equal bottom to face the table topping Silverbacks. On paper it was no contest but as Jimmy Greaves never used to say "Cricket's a funny old game". Skipper Pete Thorpe won the toss and decided to bat to take advantage of the better light. Bolton bowled the first over and looked quite nippy from side on. After five dots Mark Nicolas was bowled by the sixth to give Sale a dream start. Gary Webb was again timing the ball sweetly which was just as well as Pete was bowled for one and Steve Bottomley, against his nemesis opponents, dragged his first ball into the stumps. After eight overs Gary retired on 33 with the home team reaching 42-3. Paul Hunter was joined by Gareth and the latter hit his first ball at the house, just missing the windows. After 5 more singles Gareth top edged a simple catch on the leg side and cousin Dave joined the fray. Paul took a liking to the returning pace of Bolton, hitting two fours in an over, and retired after getting to 31. Dave hit a sprightly 14 with consecutive on and off drives for four but the later batsmen failed to make much impression, and the Viking were all out for 115 after 19.2 overs. Bob Hutton and Neill Halsall opened the bowling, keeping things tight, and from four overs the visitors had got to 19-0. After two overs Neill was rested for later on but the change back-fired as Pete Shakespeare was hit for 16 from his first over. This momentum shift continued and after eight overs Sale were cruising at 57-0 with Clegghorn retiring on 32. Paul Hunter, taking over from Bob to bowl the ninth, clean bowled Smith and conceding just one from the over. Shakey then bowled a rank full toss down the leg side and Battersby hit the ball a mile towards the distant mid-wicket boundary. Fortunately that boundary is a mile and bit long and Steve Bottomley, rushing in from the fence, took an excellent catch. Half way through and the Silverbacks were still favourites at 59-2. Mark Nicholas then came on to partner Paul and their combined 8 overs turned the match. A good catch by Pete Thorpe on the shorter boundary gave him his first wicket. The slow finger of death was raised by the Sale umpire for an LBW and then a catch by Shakey, tumbling to the ground to pose for the cameras, provided the third. Mark himself took a return catch to finish with figures of 4-0-14-4. Another good running catch from Steve gave Paul Hunter his second wicket and he also conceded just 14 runs from his 4 overs. Neill came back on and bowled Poebler to leave Sale needing 18 to win from the last over with one wicket left. The skipper took the ball and, although a couple of twos were taken, the dangerous Whitelegg on 16 was starved of the strike and only six were managed from five balls. Pete completed the upset by bowling last man Osbourne with the final ball of the match. Next up Cheadle away who beat Urmston!

Wednesday 20th July:

Over 40's: versus Brooklands away. BCC 140-4. BVCC 137-7. BVCC lost by 3 runs.

The familiar story of allowing the opposition to score too many runs returned yet again to continue the Vikings' poor run of results. Brooklands' openers took full advantage of the combination of short pitched bowling, a flat slow wicket, short boundaries and generous adjudication. A couple of catches that resulted from mistimed shots, a good catch on the boundary by Steve Bottomley and a sharp stumping by Gareth Roberts brought Vale back into it. Rod Howell otherwise known as the "panther" or "Dennis Lilley just past his prime" had the best bowling figures of 2 - 19. At one point it looked as though BV would have to chase more than 160 but Brooklands were restricted in the

end to 140 - 4. The Vale lost Gary Webb early but Steve Bottomley (30 n.o) took the attack to the opposition and after 8 overs Vale were ahead of the rate. Gareth Roberts (10) and Dave Gould (19) continued with some big blows but both fell playing attacking shots, leaving the middle and lower order a lot to do. Skipper Pete Thorpe played an anchor role but eventually fell when trying to keep the scoring rate going. The total looked to be too much until Neil Halsall (15 n.o) and Will Crowson (6 n.o) put in a late burst leaving the Vale falling just short by 3 runs. On a positive note the food was much improved on last year following feedback from one of our members and we look forward to the introduction of a desert, perhaps apple pie for next year.

Saturday 23rd July:

1st XI: versus Over Peover at home. OPCC 187-8. BVCC 138-10. BVCC lost by 49 runs.

Glum faces at the Vale reflected the story of the day as a winning position of 104-1 off 20 overs was squandered, the last 9 wickets falling in 11 overs for 34 runs. N. Bell chimed in with 8-35 off 8.2 overs with the last 5 of his victims all bowled after Jack Halsall (61) & Steve Bottomley (32) had given the home side a dream start. Earlier in the day J.Bodimeade (5) & S.Goodluck (53) had taken the opposition to 111-1 off 25 overs. Jack Halsall was the best bowler returning 3-66.

2nd XI: versus Barrow away. BCC 226-2. BVCC 156-10. BVCC lost by 70 runs.

No luck for the 2nd XI at Barrow at the home side won the toss & batted on a shirt-front of a track. Skipper J.Davies (41) & G. Roberts (111*) led the attack with B.Spinney (44*) providing good support. Danny Conroy was the best bowler with 1-26 off 9 overs. Veteran spin twins Ryan & Nicholas slowed down the scoring rate leaving Barrow to declare on 226-2 after 42 overs. Fielding highlights saw newcomer Howard Chislett managing to tweak a hamstring early in the opposition innings & 'Cousin' Dave Gould executing an excellent full diving stop with a double roll over (nothing to do with the National Lottery). In reply the Vale started well rattling 59-1 off the first 10 overs but then caused their own downfall with some poor shots. One-legged Chislett scored a fluent 30 & the later order frustrated the chirping Barrow fielders with some solid blocking. In the end, the Barrow score was just too much & the vale returned home to consult the drawing board.

Saturday 16th July:

1st XI: versus Stretton away. SCC 162-8. BVCC 108-10. BVCC lost by 54 runs.

The return match against Stretton was almost a carbon copy of the first game, except the Vale lost by 54 runs (won by 53 runs last time). At 78-5 off 30 overs, the Vale looked in control after a tight opening spell by skipper Steve Barrett, justifying the decision to insert the opposition. But the middle order made a spirited recovery led by A. Hampson (36*). Star bowler for the Vale was Rick Allan who returned 5-49 off 9 overs, taking the last 5 wickets. In reply, the home side made a poor start losing the first 4 wickets for 5 runs off only 6 overs. Steve Barrett (27) & Gareth Roberts (39) - sorry, no trophy this time ☹ - led the fightback recovering to 66-5 off 15 overs. Colin Smith dug in as usual to make an unbeaten 22. Best bowler for the opposition was P. Critchley returning 3-7 off 3.4 overs. Back to the drawing board!

2nd XI: versus Trafford MV at home. BVCC 62-10. TMVCC 64-2. BVCC lost by 8 wickets.

Vale 2nd XI came out second best in a short rain-affected game which saw Trafford MV skittle the home side in 33 overs for 62 runs, 44 of which came off the bat. Only the middle order of Turner (10), Johnson (11) & Donalds (9) significantly troubled the scorers as the last 4 batsmen all recorded ducks. Haughton with 5-17 was the pick of the opposition bowlers with Walsh (4-7) not far behind. It took the visitors 15 overs to surpass the Vale score in which time Pat Mullen managed to take 2 of the Trafford MV wickets for 16 runs off his 6 overs to salvage at least 1 positive from the game.

Wednesday 13th July:

Over 40's: versus Timperley at home. TCC 145-6. BVCC 140-6. BVCC lost by 5 runs.

Timperley batted first on a pitch close to pavilion making boundaries on that side an inviting proposition. Bob Hutton opened with a maiden and, despite 2 big sixes, ended with impressive figures of 4-1-21-1 with Paul Hunter taking a good catch over his shoulder. The visiting batsmen took a liking to bowling of Bill Crowson and Pete Shakespeare however, and the six overs they bowled between them went for 63 runs. Nobody, except skipper Neil Halsall with 2 good overs for just 4 runs and wicket at the death, could stem the flow and a challenging target of 146 was still gettable in the conditions. Gary Webb continued his excellent season, retiring on 32, Paul Hunter hit a breezy 25 and Gareth Roberts, timing the ball well after his recent century for the seconds, a stormy 22. After 11 overs we were ahead of the rate and in with a good chance. Momentum was lost in the latter overs and in the end, despite a good knock from Cousin-Dave with 21 not out, the Vikings were 5 short.

Saturday 9th July:

1st XI: versus Chelford at home. BVCC 113-10. CCC 114-1. Lost by 9 wickets.

The Vale's 11 mere mortals were no match for Chelford's one-man team as S.Mahboob took all the accolades at Priory Street. The ex-Pakistani test player dominated the game, first with the ball, bowling unchanged to take 5-63 off 22.1 overs and then with the bat crashing 8 fours & 6 sixes to rattle up 67 in short time. Everything else was a sideshow. Steve Bottomley (36) & Steve Barratt (28) gave the Vale some middle order impetus to reach 74-4 off 30 overs but there was no sting in the tail as the home side could only muster another 39 runs in the last 15 overs. At 85-1 off only 10 overs, the visitors had the game in the bag & knowcked off the remaining 29 in 4.4 overs to take all the points.

2nd XI: versus Chelford away. CCC 177-4. BVCC 166-10. Lost by 11 runs.

A promising start to the match at Chelford saw 2 wickets fall to the spin of all-rounder Gareth Roberts to leave the home side reeling at 17-2 off 8 overs. R.Munslow (96) & S. Oliver (55) then dropped anchor to steady the innings & patiently picked off the bad balls to reach 98-2 off 30 overs & 149-2 off 40. Rick Allan bowled well in 2 spells of 6 overs without luck to return 1-38 & Gareth Roberts bowled tightly to return 11-4-21-2. The Vale did well to restrict the home side to 177-4. In reply, opener Mark Nicholas (53) got the Vale off to a quick start. At 94-4 after 30 overs, the game was in the balance but E.Oliver with 4-27 took wickets at the right time to thwart the Vale's advances. Alex Power (10) & Gareth Roberts (19) made valuable contributions. At 136-9 off 35 overs the game looked out of reach but Graeme Stacey & skipper Rick Allan (20) put the visitors back in contention until Allan holed out in the deep to an excellent catch to close the innings 11 runs short of Chelford's total.

Saturday 2nd July:

1st XI: versus Alderley Park at home. APCC 219-2. BVCC 172-6. Match drawn.

It ended up honours even in a run fest at Priory Street. Winning the toss, opposition skipper Farmer has no hesitation in batting first as he and fellow opener McKeevers (54) cruised to 114 off the first 30 overs. Vale took their first wicket in the 38th over with the score on 152 as Farmer (101) took advantage of the benign track & hot weather. Umesh was pick of the Vale bowlers with 2-50. Hopton got the home side off to a good start with a brisk 29 & skipper Hasan (54) took the attack to the opposition. At 110-4 in the 30th over the game was in the balance. Hasan & Halsall departed in consecutive balls leaving it to Jack Ryan (32*) & Colin Smith (13*) to closed the innings & get maximum batting points.

2nd XI: versus Alderley Park away. BVCC 244-7. APCC 195-5. Match drawn.

The Vale returned home with 15 points from their basement dual with Alderley Park, after posting a season's best total of 244. On a damp green wicket the Vale were asked to take first knock and after a steady start, man of the match Gareth Roberts entered the fray. Roberts with a mixture of power, aggression and text book punches through the off side recorded a career best 129 not out, including 30 runs off the final over of the innings. Robert's knock overshadowed a welcome

return to form of Steve Whipday with a patience innings of 54 which laid the foundation for Robert's later assault on the home attack. In response the Alderley top order all made starts with a combination of scores in the 20's & 30's but the Vale total was never really under threat. Skipper Ryan rotated the bowling line up of Hampson, Crowson, Roberts, Nicholas, Ryan and Power with limited success as the home side settled for the draw points and 5 batting points. Crowson returning the best figures with 2-45. A couple of highlights of the innings were two excellent catches in the deep from juniors Alex Power and on debut Pat Fox.

Wednesday 29th June:

Over 40's: versus Urmston away. UCC 134-4. BVCC 94-7. BVCC lost by 39 runs. Urmston batted first and were held in check in the early overs. The returning Billy the Kid Crowson bowled his 4 overs and conceded just 21 runs. Pete Shakespeare went for one more but did get the wicket of Allcroft thanks to a good catch by Gary Webb from a well struck drive. Cartwright and Riddler with 34 and 33 respectively kept the score board ticking over for the home team. Steve Bottomley, at long, then off caught well to give Paul Hunter a wicket and when Neill Halsall took a neat return catch and Paul ran out Hood with a direct hit the Vikings felt they were in the game. The Urmston team always bat long, however, and 2 big sixes by Marsall and one by Ranikar provided impetus to reach a score of 133-4. On paper the Vikings had a strong batting line up but on grass none of the top 4 could get going. Gary Webb was well caught in the gully for 8, Paul Hunter was LBW for 1, Pete Thorpe hit an off drive down mid off's throat also for 8 and Mark Nicholas after hitting a 2 followed by 10 singles could not add to his dozen and was also caught. Going at about 3 an over the match was over after 8 overs. The Urmston skipper then gave some occasional bowlers the chance to turn their arm over. One of these was Hood who had not bowled for 35 years! His 2 overs went for 28 as Steve Bottomley added some respectability to the scoreline. Gareth Roberts hit a six into a back garden and was out very shortly afterwards, evoking childhood days of "six and out". Eventually the Vale got to within 39 of the total but, on an excellent ground that was like a snooker table, Urmston always had us in their pockets.

Saturday 25th June:

1st XI: versus Pott Shrigley at home. BVCC 134 all out. PSCC 139-9. BVCC lost by 1 wicket. The 1st XI lost a thrilling encounter at Priory Street, as the visitors Pott Shrigley pulled off a dramatic one wicket victory in the final over. The game was reduced to 43 over's per side following heavy overnight rain. The Vale took first knock on a damp wicket and contributions down the order from Jack Halsall (17), Hopton (16), skipper for the day Hasan (29), Johnson 15, Willson (14) and newcomer Kartic Umesh 12 saw the home side close on 134 all out - but importantly they did not use their full allocation of 43 over's - instead gifting their visitors two additional over's which were to prove crucial. M. Jackson was the pick of Potts attack with figures of 7-43. In response the Vale had Potts reeling at 79-9 as the wickets were shared amongst Kartic 2-16, Hussain 1-14, Willson 1-18 and the evergreen Nigel (Dad) Halsall 5-40. With 55 runs required and plenty of over's in hand R. Mattock with 37 patiently made inroads into reducing the deficit. It was in the final 45th over that the winning run was scored to secure 25 precious points for the Hillmen.

2nd XI: versus Pott Shrigley away. PSC 144-2 BVCC 140-6. BVCC lost by 6 wickets. Heavy skies, low lying cloud and an extremely wet outfield greeted the 2nd XI on their trip to the lower reaches of the Peak district. Skipper Ryan lost the toss for only the second time this season, and was predictably asked to bat first on a wet wicket. Once again the Vale made a decent fist of putting a score on the board as contributions from Colin Smith 37 no and Gareth Roberts 28 along with extras saw the visitor's post what looked like a competitive total. A break for rain (when tea was taken) at the 35 over mark meant that the Vale lost impetus at a crucial stage of their innings. In reply the home side rarely looked in trouble as Dawson 52 and Tarr 51 not out knocked off the required runs in 22 over's.

Wednesday 22nd June:

Over 40's: versus Cheadle Hulme at home. BVCC 128-4. CHCC 129-3. CHCC won by 4 wickets.

Those with a lust for close encounters were satisfied again against Cheadle Hulme, but in the end it turned out to be a Nightmare on Priory Street for the home team. Batting first this time the Vikings got off to a slow start. Mark Nicholas was stumped after getting a dozen, and when Gary Webb was bowled for 28 the score was 43-2 at the half way point. Steve Bottomley injected some much needed urgency and soon got to 31, finishing with a six that just missed the sight screen. After Steve's retirement Pete Thorpe got into his stride and a flurry of boundaries saw him also get to 31. In the second half 85 runs were scored to set a decent target of 129 to win. Bob Hutton and Neil Halsall kept the runs down in the early overs. Pete Shakespeare dropped a chance when the ball was hit hard to square leg and after 10 overs the visitors score was the same as the Vikings at 43 but with the loss of no wickets. Bowling and fielding had been generally good up to this point but the eleventh over was a turning point. Shakey was hit for 14 runs and this gave some impetus to the run chase. Misfields and another dropped catch didn't help but Neil did judge a catch in the deep to get Batty out for 25. Stewart batted well and retired at 30. A stumping by Gareth off Shakey and another good catch in the deep by Steve off Pete Thorpe were not enough to stem the flow of runs. The away team needed 7 from the last over and hit the target with a ball to spare.

Saturday 18th June:

1st XI: versus Cheadle Hulme LB away. BVCC 128-10. CHLB 129-8. Lost by 2 wickets.

The cardinal sin is not batting the full 45 overs cost the Vale the match in a tight low scoring game at Cheadle Hulme Ladybridge in which opposition all-rounder M.Bishop dominated the proceedings. Batting first the Vale made a slow start losing 2 for 15 wickets in the first 9 overs. The middle order of Hasan (23), Barrett (21) and Halsall of the Nigel variety (28) all chipped in with valuable contributions. However the divinely inspired Bishop (6-56) took wickets regularly, aided by S.Lamb (3-40) to limit Vale's total to 128 off 41 overs. In reply, Noman Hasan (3-22) took the first 3 opposition wickets to give Vale a good start and Nigel Halsall pinned down the batsmen in a tight spell of 2-33 off 18 overs. Ian Willson chipped in with 2-8 off 10 overs but Lomax (25) and Bishop (39*) shepherded their flock to victory in the 49th over.

2nd XI versus Aston at home. BVCC 191-9. ACC 145-6. Match drawn.

The Vale 2nd XI continued their high-scoring form on a damp day at Priory Street. Having won the toss & batting first, the Vale batsmen made decent contributions as wickets tumbled on a regular basis. John Ryan (19), Pete Williamson (25), Gareth Roberts (41), Tom Robinson (18), Colin Smith (13) & Rick Allan (16) all chipped in, Pete Morgan finishing the innings with an unbeaten cameo of 22. At 125-5 off 30 overs, maximum batting points were on the cards & the Vale batsmen did not disappoint. S.Newton (3-80) & M.Whitehead (3-34) were the pick of the opposition bowlers. In reply, opposition openers Holman (23) & Eddisbury (50) took advantage of some cafeteria bowling (help yourself) as they cruised past the half-way point. At this stage the Vale were bowling for run outs & the batsmen duly obliged serving up four opportunities of which the Vale accepted two (one bringing two as someone once said). Skipper John Ryan & wily spinner Gareth Roberts stemmed the flow of runs & Danny Conroy bowled well in 2 spells to return figures of 10-3-24-2. In the end, with 6 wickets down & not much more to come, the opposition shut up shop for the day as the game fizzled out to a draw, something that looked very unlikely 2 hours earlier.

Wednesday 15th June:

Over 40's: versus Cheadle at home. CCC 98-8. BVCC 99-6. BVCC won by 4 wickets.

In recent times fixtures against Cheadle and their neighbours Cheadle Hulme have been competitive affairs. Last season the Vikings tied at Cheadle Hulme and lost a match that they should have won, at Cheadle by a single run. The teams took to the field wondering if this would be a close encounter of the third kind. The Vikings bowled first, on a ground that had recovered well after Armageddon three hours earlier, and Paul Hunter and Bob Hutton kept a close rein on

the Cheadle openers. Panic began to creep into the batting side and two run outs, by Paul and Gareth Roberts, helped to keep the visitor's score down to 36-2 after 8 overs. Gareth Roberts then had a simple stumping off Mark Nicholas who bowled well, not conceding a boundary, to finish with figures of 4-0-18-1. Hall and Clayton began a recovery, both getting into the twenties, but this was cut short when skipper Neill Halsall handed the ball to Rod Howell. Clayton hit a four from his first delivery and had grander ambitions with the second when he skied a big hit wide of Paul Hunter at long off. Paul and Lee Bowyer, on the deep cover boundary, converged on the ball and, having sprinted 20 yards, Paul dived forward to take a stunning catch in both hands an inch above the ground. It was a brilliant effort, well appreciated by all who witnessed it. His next ball to Hall was skied to Neil at midwicket who took it comfortably. Rodders did not make the hat trick but he did take another wicket, with a dolly to Mark, and two eventful overs gave him figures of 3-13. Neil himself bowled a tidy spell at the death with figures of 3-0-8-1 and a target of 99 was set when the innings closed at 98-8. Paul and Mark opened the Vikings reply and both played well. With six fours Paul soon retired after getting to 33. Mark continued to drive the ball with authority but there were problems at the other end. Gareth and Lee were both out first ball and this brought in cousin Dave Gould to steady the ship. Mark retired on 30 and Dave hit a brisk 15 before getting stumped. Gary Webb was out LBW and after 16 overs the score was 93-4. Six to win from four overs. Rod Howell, batting with Steve Bottomley, tried to repeat an earlier boundary and hit the ball hard to midwicket. Another good catch resulted as the Cheadle fielder did well to hold on. This brought Pete Shakespeare to the crease who played out a maiden, hoping that Steve would hit the winning boundary when he got the strike. Four to win from two overs. Orton bowled four dots at Steve but his fifth ball was driven very hard and low straight back to the bowler. It hit him on the forearm and as he fell on his back he managed to keep the ball above ground to give the match another excellent catch. Neil played out the last ball to give Orton a wicket maiden. Four to win from six balls! Shakey hit a big top edge from Oldfield's first ball towards point. The chance went to ground and a scampered single was taken. Cheadle were now getting excited as they saw a chance to win a match they had been losing. The next ball, however, was a big wide and a bonus to the Vikings. Neil played out a dot and then levelled the scores with a single. Shakey facing with one to win from three balls. Gareth, doing duty as square leg umpire, was in danger of a cardiac arrest but the next ball was full and thumped over the cover fielder for the winning single. Steven Spielberg himself could not have directed a more dramatic finale!

Saturday 11th June:

1st XI: versus The Groves at home. BVCC 148-10. GCC 145-10. Won by 3 runs.

The Vale snatched victory from the jaws of defeat as Nigel Halsall thwarted the visitors' run chase with 3 late wickets, the key one being a magnificent catch by Steve Bottomley on the boundary off Halsall to dismiss M.Caufield (41) who had looked like winning the game with one final blow. Skipper Steve Barrett took an early wicket to leave the visitors reeling at 0-1 but they gradually fought back through Caufield, well supported by D.Cooke (38). The Vale attack took regular wickets, S.Hussein 3-11 & I.Willson 2-22 to leave The Groves with much to do at 106-8 off 30 overs. At the same stage in the Vale innings, the home side had scored 104-5 with Jack Halsall (36), Steve Bottomley (21) & Steve Barrett (47) all making good contributions. So with wickets in hand, maximum batting points was the target but T.Garratt bowled tightly to return 9-4-14-4, supported by S.Aldcroft (4-52) as the Vale were all out in the 45th over for 148, which ultimately was just enough to take a much needed 25 points.

2nd XI: versus The Groves away. BVCC 199-4. GCC 201-6. Lost by 4 wickets.

The 2nd XI snatched defeat from the jaws of victory as they travelled to The Groves (renamed from Castrol). The Vale took advantage of winning the toss to bat first on a good track for both batsmen & bowlers. Skipper John Ryan (17) & Pete Williamson (77) put on 50 for the first wicket, helped by a bizarre 14-ball 2nd over which contained 8 wides. Colin Smith (40) continued his recent good form making batting look easy, even on one leg, as he, his runner Jack Ryan & Williamson pushed the score along. Gareth Roberts entered in the 39th over & hammered an unbeaten 30, with

17 coming in the last over. 199 looked enough as The Groves lost 2 early wickets to Paresh Solanki (3-63) but home side skipper J.Ball (53) led the recovery. S.Jones (75) in his first game for 18 months was brutal with any wayward bowling as he crashed boundaries to put The Groves up with the run rate. The Vale spilled some difficult catches but in the end could not prevent a defeat that had looked so unlikely 2 hours earlier.

Saturday 4th June:

1st XI: versus Chester CO away. CCO 229-7. BVCC 176-5. Match drawn.

Runs flowed freely from both sides as the Vale salvaged a draw at Chester County Officers. Batting first, Chester raced to 143-1 off 30 overs with opener M.Rowlands hammering 132, supported by I.Rule (51). Jack Hallsall (3-46) & Syed Hussein (3-23) pegged Chester back somewhat but they still managed to declare after 42 overs on 229-7. In reply, Mark Nicholas (30) made a solid start & the middle order chipped in with teen-scores. Steve Barrett kept the scoreboard ticking along to 101-4 off 30 overs. He finished with an unbeaten 67, ably supported by Iain Johnson (29*) but the Vale were never really up with the run rate even with the additional 3 overs & they finished 53 runs short and pocketed 11 valuable points.

2nd XI versus Kingsley at home. KCC 218-2. BVCC 123-6. Match drawn.

Runs also flowed freely at Priory Street but mainly from the bat of visiting opener A. Ainsworth who scored an unbeaten 135 in 40 overs. Vale's cunning ploy to make him run singles worked as he could only muster 35 in the last 10 overs, having reached his 100 in the first 30. In fairness, the Vale attack did nothing wrong as Ainsworth & fellow opener J.Moores (40) piled on the runs. Danny Conroy bowled well & John Morris picked up the 2 wickets for 39 runs. Kingsley declared after 40 overs giving the Vale an extra 5 on what appeared to be a sporting declaration. However, the Kingsley bowling attack made good use of the facilities & bowled tightly to restrict the Vale reply, J.Rugen returning 4-43 in his 2 spells. Colin Smith led the Vale reply with an unbeaten 34 & Jack Ryan chipped in with a solid 33 but the Vale were never in sight of the Kingsley total & batted out the 50 overs with ease.

Wednesday 25th May:

Over 40's: versus Brooklands at home. BCC 128-5. BCC 98-8. BVCC lost by 30 runs.

Bowling first the Vale got off to a steady start with Pete Shakespeare and Bill Crowson opening the bowling. Shakey managed to clip Wilson's off stump and then Buchan skied the same bowler just short of the onrushing Steve Bottomley. Buchan called for a second run but a superb throw back to the bowler saw Higgins run out and this was indicative of a sharp fielding by the Vikings. After 8 overs the visitors were 46-2. Mr Reliable, Bob Hutton, again bowled very well and his figures of 4-018-1 did not do him justice. Towards the end of the innings, despite the best efforts of Mark Nicholas and Rod Howell, Brooklands managed to accelerate their accumulation of runs. Taking advantage of the short boundary they hit 2 sixes into the field and a long six towards the pavilion to set a challenging total of 129 to win. Opening the batting with Mark Nicholas Gary Webb was back to form and retired after a brisk 31. Steve Bottomley was bowled by a full delivery from Lewis for 6 and when Mark Nicholas was surprisingly given out LBW for 13 alarm bells were beginning to ring. Pete Thorpe looked good, hitting 2 powerful boundaries, and then was caught and bowled by a good effort from Lewis. Colin Smith was joined by Gareth Roberts, struggling with a calf injury, and the Vale could not keep the score board ticking over fast enough. After Gareth was out wickets tumbled and at the end we were well short at 98-8 with Colin on 16 not out.

Saturday 28th May:

1st XI: versus Bunbury at home. BVCC 101-10. BCC 102-1. Lost by 9 wickets.

Maybe it was the anticipation of the evening entertainment at Wembley that caused Vale minds to be focussed elsewhere as they failed to take advantage of a shirt-front of a wicket at Priory Street. Batting first, only Simon Hopton (25) troubled the scoreboard as the home side crashed

to 9-3 in the 8th over & 60-8 off 30 overs. The tail wagged with Syed Hussein hammering 23 as Vale succumbed in the 42nd over with D. Roberts returning 7-3-10-4 in only his 2nd game for Bunbury 1st XI. Openers J.Bettany (44*) & R. Munson (32) wasted no time in plundering the Vale attack & G.Johnson (22*) completed the rout in only the 21st over leaving Vale plenty of time to prepare for the second disappointment of the day. I wonder if Messi fancies a game of cricket for the Vale?

2nd XI: versus Bunbury away. BVCC 130-9. BCC 131-5. Lost by 5 wickets.

The 2nd XI travelled to the picture-postcard village of Bunbury but failed to take advantage of a hard track & a fast outfield, only posting 130-9 off their allotted 45 overs. Skipper John Ryan (43) played his usual role in holding the innings together & was ably supported by Danny Conroy (17) & Dominic Turner (29). At 75-3 off 30 overs the foundation was there but R.Paleja weighed in with 4-19 off 8 overs to limit the visitors' score. The 2nd half of the game was played to the bizarre backdrop of farmyard noises (no surprise there as the ground is in the middle of rural Cheshire) blended with a mixture of rock music & Sinatra songs which seemed to spur on the home side, especially Whittaker (30*) and skipper Ryder (30*) who saw them home to victory with more than 10 overs to spare. For the visitors Bill Crowson took 2-49 & Danny Conroy was unlucky not to take a wicket in his spell of 0-10.

Wednesday 25th May:

Over 40's: versus Timperley away. TCC 61-10. BCC 63-2. BVCC won by 8 wickets.

Timperley won the toss and decided to bat first. Pete Shakespeare opened the bowling and, with Will Crowson at the other end, runs were in limited supply for the home team. After 8 overs they had reached 26-3. Pete Thorpe had run out opener Smith for a duck with a direct hit, Will Crowson conceded just 7 runs and Pete Shakespeare finished his 4 overs taking 2 wickets for 14. Bob Hutton, with the help of an inspired Garth Roberts behind the stumps, kept the pressure on by taking 3 for 13 in his allotted overs. His first was a thin edge to the keeper, with the Timperley batsman sportingly walking. The second was an excellent stumping and the third a catch at mid on. Gareth also took a very good catch, off bat and pad, from the bowling of Mark Nicholas. Lee Bowyer then mopped up the tail with a bowled and LBW to get 10 men Timperley all out for 61. There was a shock when Gary Webb was bowled for a golden duck by Jackson from the second ball of the Viking's reply. Steve Bottomley joined Pete Thorpe to steady the ship and the Vikings had got half way to the target when Pete middled a drive but was well caught and bowled by Smith. Paul Hunter came in and hit a couple of effortless boundaries. Steve Bottomley also found the ropes 4 times and then hit a massive 6 over long off to complete the rout.

Saturday 21st May:

1st XI: versus Disley away. BVCC 109-8. DCC 110-6. Lost by 4 wickets.

Vale came off second best in all matters except eating the excellent tea, as they lost to Disley up in the Derbyshire hills. Maybe it was altitude sickness that caused the Vale to struggle to 64-4 in 30 overs on a benign track. A more believable reason was the bowling of the opposition leg-spinner & skipper M.Blackburn who returned figures of 18-5-36-4. Only Jack Halsall (23) & Steve Bottomley (29) created any serious momentum as the middle order batsmen decelerated to 82-6 off 40 overs, ending 1 run short of batting points, with Gareth Roberts unbeaten on 15. In reply, the Disley batsmen used the pace of the ball off the pitch to score freely. Ian Willson, bowling into the gale, sent back both openers cheaply but A.Clarke held the innings together scoring 49, albeit with 3 bats (does that make his score only 16?) supported by ex-Vale 2nd XI player S.Reynolds (20). Steve Bottomley threw-down the stumps from 50 yards to break the partnership & spin-twins Mark Nicholas & Gareth Roberts (2-19) slowed down the scoring rate but the home side reached their target in the 32nd over. A few dropped catches & another 20 runs would have made for a different result. If only!

2nd XI: versus Disley at home. DCC 150-10. BVCC 90-10. Lost by 60 runs.

Disley completed the double over the Vale with a 60 run win at Priory Street. John Ryan lost the toss for the first time this season & Disley took first use of the facilities. Pat Mullen (3-34) continued his recent good form & Pete Shakespeare bowled tidily returning 2-35 off 15 overs. Bill Crowson chipped in with 2-17 but it was opposition skipper D. O'Connor (55) who held the innings together to finish on 150, probably 30 runs too many. In reply opener Iain Johnson (31) anchored the innings but wickets fell around him as W Madoosh (3-30) and D. O'Connor shared the wickets. O'Connor returned figures of 7-3-9-4 to add to his batting success to claim the man-of-the-match award & 25 points for the visitors.

Wednesday 18th May:

Over 40's Friendly: versus Bramhall at home. BVCC 137-4. BCC 114-8. BVCC won by 23 runs.

The morning rain, replaced by a breezy and sunny afternoon, allowed this friendly to take place on a pitch that was slow and sticky. The match was played in a good spirit and the Vikings did well to muscle their way to 137-4 to set a decent total. Gary Webb and Steve Bottomley retired at 30 and Gareth Roberts almost got there before falling to a smart catch and bowled by Standall for 26. He had appeared to be out in the same manner earlier in his innings to an even better catch low down at the bowler's end. Umpire Bob Hutton was not sure if the second attempt catch had touched the ground, however, and neither was Standall who took off the bails. The net result was cousin Dave (Gould) being given run out. In reply Bramhall got well behind the rate. Peter Shakespeare conceded just 9 runs from his 4 overs and Bob Hutton got 2-9 from 3 overs. Skipper Peter Thorpe brought on occasional spinner Gary Webb to take a wicket via a stumping and Lee Bowyer took his maiden wicket for the over 40s when he caught a skier off his own bowling. Yarwood and Standall provided a late rally and Bramhall still had a chance needing 34 to win from the last 2 overs. Yarwood took a particular liking to Rod Howell's bowling hitting 21 from his second over. Peter Thorpe brought himself on for the last over and got 2 wickets for 7 runs leaving Bramhall 23 runs short.

Saturday 14th May:

1st XI: versus Sandbach at home. SCC 244-2. BVCC 96-6. Match Drawn.

Batting first, visitors Sandbach started slowly posting only 13 off the first 10 overs and 71-1 off 30. Opener S.Kaira with 56 held the innings together. Having reached 158-2 in the 40th over, P. Hampshire (64*) and T.Threadgold (91*) launched a blistering assault on the Vale attack crashing 93 off the last 5 overs to finish on 244-2. The heavens opened in the tea interval & rain reduced the Vale innings to only 29 overs meaning that they would have to score at 8.4 an over to win the game. Jack Halsall (53) led the response but the task was an impossible one & Vale finished on 96-6, with Nigel Halsall unbeaten on 13.

2nd XI: versus Sandbach away. SCC 145-8. BVCC 65-10. BVCC lost by 80 runs.

The Vale 2nd XI came off second best on a cold, windy & wet afternoon at Sandbach. Skipper John Ryan invited the home side to bat first & openers Metcalfe (28) & Olpin (34) made a solid start with opener Pat Mullen bowling particularly well without success. Seeking a breakthrough, Ryan brought himself on to bowl & soon had "My-Mate-Martin" Metcalfe caught at the wicket. The Vale bowlers Solanki, Paul, Mullen (2-43) & Morgan bowled tightly as Ryan (4-30) pinned down one end. A. Copnall with an unbeaten 35 saw the home side from 83 off 30 overs to 145 at the close. In reply the Vale struggled against some tight bowling & lost wickets at regular intervals with Williamson anchoring the innings scoring a meagre 20 runs off 28 overs. Andy Houldsworth hit a rapid 14 & young Rory Nugent on debut scored his first run for the Vale in a gutsy innings. The match finished in the 30th over as the visitors returned to the dry & warmth of the dressing room to re-group for next time.

Wednesday 11th May:

Over 40's: versus Urmston at home. BVCC 68-10. UCC 69-2. BVCC lost by 8 wickets.

Last week's good start to the campaign evaporated against Urmston who outplayed the Vikings in all departments of the game. Urmston won the toss and elected to field. The omens were not good when Peter Thorpe was out LBW to Campion for just 3. Gary Webb maintained his good form with 23 before Campion pierced his defences. There was precious little resistance after this with only Steve Bottomley, hitting 3 boundaries including a six, taking the attack to the opposition. All the Urmston bowlers did well especially Pollard. He was almost unplayable and conceded just 4 runs in his 4 overs, taking 2 wickets. Bob Hutton and Neil Halsall opened the bowling and were both economical with figures of 4-0-19-1 and 4-0-13-0 respectively. It was a hopeless task however and some lusty blows, particularly by Cartwright who retired on 33, saw the visitors home with over seven overs to spare.

Saturday 7th May:

1st XI: versus Over Peover away. BVCC 62-10. OPCC 65-1. Lost by 9 wickets.

The 1st XI's fine start to the season came to an abrupt end as wickets tumbled on a damp day at Over Peover. The Vale innings lasted only 22 overs as A.Ingarjiola returned 6-24 off 12 overs, aided by some injudicious batting, to skittle the visitors for 65 runs. Only Simon Hopton made any impact remaining unbeaten on 18* in a patient 65 minutes. The Bodimeades, opening for the home side, wasted no time in knocking off the required total, reaching their target in the 10th over for the loss of one Bodimeade, leaving "J" unbeaten on 44*.

2nd XI: versus Barrow at home. BCC 207-8. BVCC 206-5. Match drawn.

The 2nd XI narrowly missed out on victory in a high-scoring cliff-hanger at Priory Street. Skipper John Ryan won the toss for the 3rd successive week & inserted the visitors on a damp track. Runs came freely at 5 an over as the visitors raced to 107-2 off 20 overs. Opener N. Bell (74) held the innings together aided by a quick 56 from G. Roberts (no, not our G. Roberts) to reach 171-4 off 35 overs. A flurry from the late middle order took Barrow to an early declaration on 207-8 off 42 overs. Paresh Solanki bowled well in his first game of the season to return 4-56 off 15 overs. With 3 extra overs available above the normal 45, the Vale replied with a solid opening partnership of 102 in 95 minutes and 29 overs as skipper John Ryan (70*) held the innings together supported by Williamson (46). Andy Houldsworth crashed a rapid 36 to take Vale to 180-5 off 45 overs, leaving 27 off the remaining 3 overs. 10 runs were required at the start of the last over bowled by the naggingly accurate A. Roberts (yes, another Roberts). Colin Smith (10*) & skipper Ryan worked ones and twos but a four off the last ball wasn't enough and left the Vale 2 runs short of victory in a nail-biting finish to an excellent game.

Wednesday 4th May:

Over 40's: versus Cheadle Hulme away. BVCC 157-3. CHCC 121-10. BVCC won by 36 runs. Batting first the Vikings got off to a great start with Gary Webb retiring on 31 after just 14 balls. He hit 5 fours and a six over square leg to achieve an impressive strike rate of 221. His opening partner Peter Thorpe provided solid support to retire on 30 with 5 fours across a fast outfield. Mark Barrett hit a quick 14 from 10 balls before being stumped off Losse and Mark Nicholas got to 29, with 4 boundaries, before being caught and bowled trying to get to 30 with another hit to the ropes. Gareth Roberts showed some promising form hitting 3 fours and a majestic six over long on. He got to 26 before Losse bowled him off the twelfth ball he had received, giving him an equally impressive strike rate of 216. Gareth's cousin Dave, David Gould, contributed well towards the end and his 19 not out off 13 helped the Vikings reach 157-3, beating last year's highest of 147 in a losing chase at Brooklands. In reply Cheadle were still in the match after 10 overs getting to 70-1, Mark Nicholas dismissing the dangerous Potts, stumped by keeper Gareth Roberts. Phil Knowles then bowled with good control, varying his pace well to finish with figures of 4-0-22-1. In a bid to keep up with the rate Pickles went for a second run but was well out when Peter Thorpe attacked the ball and threw decisively to Gareth to whip the bails off. In fading light skipper Neil Halsall pulled a master stroke by tossing the ball to "slingshot" Bill Crowson. He hit the stumps in successive deliveries, got a wicket with another stumping, and then

bowled out another to take 4 wickets. Neil had given Lee Bowyer the nod to bowl the last over but Billy had one ball left in his spell and, in near darkness, Brown seemed to have eventually come to terms with the low action of the left armer when he smashed the ball towards the mid-wicket boundary. Lee somehow managed to see the missile and took a brilliant tumbling catch to get 10 man Cheadle all out for 121 and give Bill magical figures of 4-0-13-5.

Saturday 30th April:

1st XI: versus Stretton at home. BVCC 172 all out. SCC 119 all out. BVCC won by 53 runs. The Vale 1st XI built on their successful start to the season with a fine win over Stretton at Priory Street. Having lost the toss the Vale made a competitive 125-5 off the first 30 overs with Jack Halsall (65) continuing his fine early season form. The next 5 overs saw them slump to 138-5, with Simon Hopton (18) finding an imaginative way to get out (LBW reverse-sweeping). Ian Willson wagged the tail scoring a quick 21 as the Vale ended their innings on 172 in the 42nd over. In reply the visitors started well, racing to 97-1 off 22 overs with J.Wells (61) scoring the lions' share of the runs. Believing the game to be in the bag, Stretton succumbed to the bowling of Nigel Halsall (4-33) and skipper Steve Barrett who returned match-winning figures of 5-1-15-5 as 3rd change bowler. It was all over within 30 overs as the Vale bagged 25 points.

2nd XI: versus Trafford MV away. TMVCC 210-5. BVCC 161-8. Match drawn.

A gritty performance by the Vale 2nd XI saw them salvage a draw out of their away match against Trafford MV. The home side rattled up a score of 210-5 with Lancaster (67) and Davison (37*) the major contributors. For the Vale, Rick Allan (2-43) and Graeme Stacey (2-42) were the key bowlers. Skipper John Ryan (72) led the response for the second week running. Syed Hussein (11), Alex Power (12) and Andy Houldsworth (11) all chipped in with useful contributions but it was left to Colin Smith (21*) to bat out the overs. Pomfret was the most successful bowler returning 4-68.

Saturday 23rd April:

1st XI: versus Chelford away. CCC 205 all out. BVCC 206-4. BVCC won by 6 wickets. New skipper Steve Barrett got off to a winning start as the Vale travelled to Chelford for their opening fixture of the 2011 season. The home side decided to bat first & at 75-1 off 10 overs with former test cricketer S. Mahboob (51) & S. Fonn (95) both in fine form, things looked grim. They took the score to 114 off 16 overs at which point Jack Halsall struck to remove Mahboob. Enter Uncle Nigel Halsall into the attack as 2nd change bowler & the game turned around with Nigel returning excellent figures of 15-7-26-7 to skittle Chelford for 205 in 42 overs. In reply, the Vale got off to a shaky start but Jack Halsall (113) & Steve Bottomley (50) took control to put the visitors within sight of their goal. Jack's patient century contained 13 fours & 1 six. Simon Hopton (24*) hit the winning runs in the 45th over to give the Vale a well-deserved victory & good start to the season.

2nd XI: versus Chelford at home. CCC 114 all out. BVCC 115-6. BVCC won by 4 wickets.

The Vale 2nd XI opened their early season account with a good win over visitors Chelford at Priory Street. Skipper John Ryan inserted the visitors & marshalled his bowlers well to create pressure on the batsman. Pat Mullen broke through twice early in the innings to record figures of 6-5-2-2 in his first spell. Rick Allan chipped in with the comment "one brings two" 13 minutes into the season & more importantly supported well with 2-30. Bill Crowson (1-26) discovered for the first time that left-arm over is a good option to try & Graeme Stacey bagged 3-39 to skittle the visitors for 114 in 37 overs with R. Munslow last out for 62. In reply, Vale started well with Skipper John Ryan (45) in command from the start. Alex Power (9) gave good support and when debutant Andy Houldsworth (43) joined Ryan, the scoring rate quickened. The win would have been more comfortable but for a flurry of wickets at the end (D. Taylor 2-12) but Vale were triumphant in the 34th over allowing skipper Ryan to bag 20 points.