



Tough at the top for champions

Sutton skipper Keith Medlycott has warned his players defending their Surrey Championship Premier Division crown will be more difficult than winning it last year.

The Gander Green Lane side romped to the title with a match to spare last season on the back of 50 wickets from Phil Sampson and a solid season of run scoring.

Medlycott will be looking for the former Surrey seamer to spearhead the attack once again, alongside Andy Sartor, pace bowling new boy Ali Jaffree and returning Staffordshire all-rounder Sam Seadon.

Sutton could be without young batsman Arun Harinath, who will be attempting to win a first team place with Surrey this summer, but the player-coach thinks his side is well armed for another assault on the table's top slot.

"We have got pretty much the same squad as last year, but that is the past now and we must look forward," he said.

"It is going to be pretty exciting again this year.

"We played good cricket for long periods of last season and only just won in the end, so I would suggest it is going to be just as difficult this season - if not more so.

"Sam has been unfortunate not to pick up a county contract but his return is key. There will be a lot of competition in the bowling ranks, which can only be good."

Sutton start their campaign at Weybridge, who only avoided relegation last year with a final-day win over Medlycott's men, this Saturday.

An early 20-point deduction for fielding an ineligible player wrecked Weybridge's title hopes last time, but Gavin Franklin expects his team to challenge this season.

The arrival of Tasmanian leg-spinner Jason Shelton should bring wickets, while former Kent opening batsman Chris Walsh will be looking to smash the runs.

Star youngsters Adam Bennett and Henry Turner will feature and Franklin says things are shaping up well.

"We were chasing our own tails from the start last year. Psychologically it had a big effect on us," said Franklin.

"We have a good balance of youth and experience."

Richard Pudney, the leading run-scorer last summer, will be a key man as Wimbledon bid to improve on a fourth-placed finish, which came in spite of a 20-point deduction.

Wimbledon will feel the loss of all-rounder David Brown, who has joined Gloucestershire, while Scott Moody has also left the club.

The Church Road club will be relying on more strong batting in 2007 from Pudney and opener Graham Grace.

"Puds was unplayable in the 20/20 competition last year," said skipper Mark Shimmin, who sees his side as potential champions despite not having the strongest bowling line-up.

"We've got a good shout in the league this season.

"With so many big hitters we'll be even harder to beat again in the 20/20."

SATURDAY'S FIXTURES

Castle Lager Surrey Championship Premier Division: Cobham Avorians v Dulwich, Guildford v Sunbury, Reigate Priory v Farnham, Weybridge v Sutton, Wimbledon v Normandy.

Division One: Beddington v Esher, Old MidWhitgiftians v Ashted, Purley v Pyrford, Spencer v Banstead, Walton-on-Thames v Malden Wanderers
Division Two: Camberley v Cranleigh, East Molesey v Brook, Horsley & Send v Old Whitgiftians, [Metropolitan Police](#) v Old Emanuel, Mitcham v Cheam.

Division Three: Edward Alleyn & Honor Oak v Old Wimbledonians, Egham v Bank of England, Maori Oxshott v Warlingham, Streatham & Marlborough v. Farncombe, Worcester Park v Epsom.

Division Four: Churt v Ashford, [Kingstonian](#) v Chertsey, Leatherhead & Cobham v Dorking, Southern Railway & Kenley v Wallington, Woking & Horsell v Chessington.

Division Five: Addiscombe v Chipstead, Coulsdon & Walcountians, Old Hamptonians v Chobham, Oxted & Limsfield v Staines & Laleham, Ripley v Old Rutlishians, Thames Ditton v Sinjungrammarians.

11:25am Wednesday 9th May 2007

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