

# 26 COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP - DIVISION TWO



Northamptonshire  
481-7 drew  
with Sussex

**Toss:** Uncontested,  
Sussex elected to  
field first  
Northants 9pts,  
Sussex 6pts  
**Umpires:** BV Taylor,  
RA Kettleborough

## Ben 'gutted' at missing out on 300

By Matt Wright  
Northampton, Apr 10-13

**TO say Ben Duckett was just picking up where he left off last season would not be doing the Northamptonshire youngster's exceptional knock against Sussex justice, but there was a tinge of frustration as well.**

In a drawn match heavily affected by rain, Duckett hammered a magnificent 282 not out off 367 balls in an innings that lasted eight-and-a-half hours and included 38 fours and two sixes.

It amounted to a fifth century in the last nine County Championship matches for the 21-year-old, who has been a revelation for Northants since being moved up to opener midway through last season.

But it was an injustice that he was not given a chance to become the youngest triple centurion in the history of the Championship due to a sodden outfield, combined with a wet bowler's run-up at the Pavilion End at Wantage Road, wiping out the final two days.

Duckett tweeted after day four was called off an hour before it was due to get under way: "Words cannot describe how gutted I am."

"Very frustrating two days, just want to thank everyone for their

amazing support. I have never wanted rain to stay away as much as the past few days and unfortunately it hasn't."

Duckett was only 21 runs from taking the record off a former Northants stalwart, but David Sales' unbeaten 303 against Essex in 1999 still stands.

However, his magnificent knock ranks as the eighth-highest in the county's all-time list.

Northants lost England all-rounder David Willey to Yorkshire during the off-season, but their academy appears to have unearthed another special talent who is piling on the runs at the top of the order.

Duckett said: "I can't forget about how I finished off last season and I'm just trying to take that into this year and play positively."

"That's how I got my runs last season and there are going to be times where I might have people on my back for the shots that I play, but on my day it will come off."

"It hasn't really hit me yet. There was a bit of luck, a few edges over the slips and a couple of drops, but I guess that's got to happen if you're going to get big runs."

"Unfortunately I missed a straight one last week against Oxford MCCU, which can happen, but I went in to play my natural game, be as positive as I can and bat as long as I can."

Northants' big total against the favourites for promotion will be a boost to their confidence – there

were decent totals for captain Alex Wakely and Nottinghamshire loanee Jake Libby as well.

But it is not yet known whether their attack will be good enough to bowl teams out.

While, conversely, Sussex's batsmen will be frustrated not to have had any time at the crease over the four days.

Both sides also have injury concerns, with Olly Stone's side strain adding to problems for Steven Crook, Rob Keogh and Rob Newton for Northants.

Meanwhile, Sussex captain Luke Wright was ruled out with an on-going wrist injury he picked up playing in the Pakistan Super League during the winter.

But their head coach Mark Davis played down concerns Wright is set for an extended spell out, saying: "Obviously it is not a great way to start the new season without your captain, but I think he will be fine."

"His back has settled down quite nicely and the medical people feel they can get his wrist sorted quite quickly so we are not too concerned and, hopefully, Luke will be back for the next game."



**200 and counting:** Ben Duckett celebrates passing the double century mark on Day Two. Inset: Ajmal Shahzad bowling for Sussex

PICTURES: Getty Images



### The Verdict

All expectations were that Northants would find 2016 a struggle. With the off-field issues overshadowing the action which occurs inside the boundary rope, many forgot the talent that is actually present at the county.

They won't forget anymore after Ben Duckett's fifth century in nine Championship matches, but it was so much more than just a ton – 182 more to be precise!

Duckett was denied the chance to become the youngest triple centurion in Championship cricket by the weather, but the 21-year-old reminded everyone of the talent he possesses.

It wasn't all about Duckett though with Jake Libby and Alex Wakely both contributing, though we never got the chance to see what the Northants bowlers could do.

For Sussex, who chose to bowl remember, there will be a worry that they couldn't find a way through.

To take just seven wickets across two days, when the pitch looked decent for bowling, will be a worry. They weren't expensive, but 20 wickets are needed to win matches. Teenager George Garton impressed on his Championship debut, being the only bowler to take more than one.



### Star man

**BEN DUCKETT – Northants:**

You feel for him being left stranded on 282 not out, but the season could not have started any better. Just think of the average come September

### Key moment

When the heavens opened after two days of play, Duckett must have had his head in his hands. Northants were well on top, too

### Match stat

Chris Rogers was the last triple centurion for Northants, making 319 against Gloucestershire in 2006.

### England watch

**DANNY BRIGGS – Sussex:** Would probably take an economy of just under three as he looks for regular cricket following his move from Hampshire

### NORTHANTS 1st INNINGS

		Runs	Balls	4s	6s
Libby	lbw b Magoffin	42	109	5	0
Duckett	not out	282	367	38	2
Wakely	lbw b Briggs	51	133	6	1
Cobb	c Brown b Robinson	24	63	4	0
Levi	b Garton	11	35	1	0
Rossington	b Garton	0	4	0	0
Murphy	c Taylor b Shahzad	31	53	3	0
Kleinveidt	c Brown b Garton	13	15	1	1
Gleeson	not out	2	35	0	0
Extras	8nb 6b 6lb 5pens	25			
Total	for 7	481 (135ovs)			

Did not bat: Azharullah, Sanderson

BOWLING	O	M	R	W	FALL OF WICKETS
Magoffin	22.0	8	53	1	130 Libby
Robinson	20.0	1	74	1	253 Wakely
Shahzad	24.0	2	95	1	343 Cobb
Garton	21.0	1	93	3	369 Levi
Briggs	36.0	5	107	1	371 Rossington
Wells	12.0	0	42	0	435 Murphy
					461 Kleinveidt



Gotcha: George Garton