

BAR OFF TO A WINNING START

Saturday

Potters Bar 159 for 6 off 45 overs

Letchworth 152 all out in 44.5 overs

So the season has started and the Bar have started with a win and although the scores were pretty close, the boys did more than enough to suggest that they had enough left in the tank to improve.

On a beautiful sunny day, the Bar travelled to their league 1 opponents who were confident that they could beat us and they fielded nigh on a full league side. They were also bolstered by the appearance of Stevenage new signing Richard Jerome, who was guesting for the hosts.

On a wicket that looked firm but was rather predictably slow and low, Bar were inserted and although I was perched somewhere in the vicinity of Luton Airport (it was really that far away) the cricket season had finally began.

However it wasn't long before the boys were in trouble on a surface that would help the bowlers and after losing Mike Palmer for just 6 where he played too early on a ball that appeared to stop and Matt Evans, who ground his way to just 7 in 38 balls, before he was back in the hutch after wafting at a wide one and offered a regulation catch to the keeper. 18 for 2 was not the start new skipper Lenny Cooper was expecting, but this brought Ollie Coughlan and Gavin Baker to the crease and they slowly started to impose themselves on the Division One attack.

With some good shot selection and using the slow wicket to their advantage the boys played with a great deal of intelligence and rather than opt for the big shots, the boys seemed to nurdle and nudge their way to a respectable total. At the drinks total we were 64 for 2 with 22 overs left of our allocation of 45 overs however the boys needed to up the tempo and up it they did.

Ollie was the first to get to the '50' milestone. It took 86 balls and this was quickly followed by Gavin Baker reaching the same milestone. For the record it took Gavin just 3 balls longer. This was just the second time I've had the privilege of watching Gavin bat and at the age of just 18 years old its obvious this lad has talent in abundance. He can play all of the shots and when faced by the wily campaigner Richard Jerome, he used both patience and some fair degree of skill and looked in no trouble whatsoever.

However, due to the large playing area and the lack of boundaries being struck, the pressure to make the most out of the running between the wickets was having an adverse effect on the fitness of Ollie in particular and to say he was struggling was an understatement and he threw his wicket away and thanks to the famous PBCC 'middle order pack of cards' routine we were restricted to just 159 for 6 off of our 45 overs. I felt that this would be more than enough however we would still have to bowl and field like a side who is a division above the hosts. However first game or no first game the total should have been more as we only managed just 8 runs off the last 20 balls.

We needed to breakthrough early and thanks to a good opening spell from Michael John and Lenny Cooper it soon arrived as their opener played down the wrong line and Michael John made a mess of his stumps. 6 for 1 and the boys were confident of winning the game at a canter. However, in came ex-Cheshunt and Wormley stalwart Steve March and he and his batting partner started to accumulate the runs as Bar's bowling started to get a little predictable, however at times it wasn't helped by the fielding as it was ordinary at best.

After one blatant refusal, two dropped catches and at least one missed stumping chance, things were looking gloomy as Letchworth had cruised to 90 for 1 with still 16 overs remaining, however the spin twins of Paul McGee and Paul Barker finally got their claws into the Letchworth top order and quickly removed March 45 and Elliott 38 and whipped out the totally out of his depth number 4 for 0 and it wasn't long before the five disappeared and we were back in the pound seats with the score sat at 96 for 5.

A period of play then ensued that Letchworth plodded along but thanks to Paul McGee the steady stream of wickets was continuing to fall however with an over to go Letchworth needed 12 to win and Paul McGee enticed keeper Wallis to slog to cow corner where Mike Palmer held a good skied catch, Cranston ran down the wicket in ridiculous fashion to allow Paul Martin his second stumping of the innings and the number 11 Barclay handed Macca a hatrick by slogging up village style to long on where Gavin Baker comfortably held onto call a halt to the proceedings.

So the boys had won their first match at the first time of asking. Everyone had a relatively good work out and our strength this year will be our slow bowling department. In the fit again Paul McGee, the returning Paul Barker and the highly talented Nesan Jeyaratnam, we have a slow bowling department that would be envied at any club in the league – mark my words, these three will win us a lot of games throughout the year and will take us certainly to the higher echelons of the league.

Sunday

Potters Bar 232 for 3 off 36 overs

Old Albanian 169 for 8 off 36 overs

Sunday saw the boys travel to old Albanian in a rain reduced match where the boys managed to club a creditable 232 in just 36 overs with both Sunday skipper Tom Coughlan and Lenny Cooper finding their form with the bat. Tom scored an excellent 83 and Lenny clubbed a fine 60-odd not out as Bar cruised to a match winning total.

The game ended in farce, as it was forced to end in the dark and with a ball that resembled a bar of soap and after reducing the hosts to just 95 for 8, they managed to get to 169 for 8 as the side all played some part in the festivities.

That is of course the main thing. Players need to spend time at the wicket and bowlers need to get in the habit of putting the ball in the right place and hopefully this weekend would have provided just the sort of practice the boys require to hit the ground running.

Next week sees a big step up as the first team entertain HCPL Premier League side Reading and make their bow in the National Competition on Sunday where Cockfosters provide the opposition and its high time Dave Pett's second eleven made their bow for the season as on Saturday where they travel to fellow Saracens League 2 side Leverstock Green.

Please note both games at the club next weekend are 1pm starts and if weather ruins the match on Sunday yours truly has arranged for the Bank Holiday Monday to be used as a rain day for the Cockfosters fixture.

Until next time have a good week and remember the futures bright, the futures Potters Bar

Regards

Fred