

## **UNDERSTRENGTHED BAR COLLAPSE TO DEFEAT**

**Eastcote 219 for 8 off 45 overs**

**Potters Bar 116 all out in 27.3 overs**

So the season has begun and the omens don't read too cleverly as the Bar were hammered by Middlesex Premier League new boys Eastcote in a decidedly one-sided affair at The Walk on Saturday.

In conditions akin to that of the middle of July, Bar skipper Len Cooper lost the toss and Eastcote had first use of a wicket that was shall we say a little 'up and down'. It wasn't long before the visitors started to make hay whilst the sun shone as they took advantage of the lightening fast outfield and the short boundaries as the opening attack of Michael John and Gavin Baker were finding the early passage of play somewhat tricky.

Eastcote lost their first wicket on 32 after Luke Towers, Eastcote's overseas capture from Western Australia tried an expansive off-drive only to edge to Bar new boy Guy Thatcher who held a regulation catch. Bar in truth then wilted a bit in the sun as they took the game to be what it was meant to be, a practice match, a game where nigh on everyone gets a chance to dip their toe in the water for the first time since the start of September. The visitors took the match more seriously however as they selected a strong side including an ex-Middlesex player as well as both their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> eleven overseas players.

Bar only started to get a grip back in the encounter when skipper Lenny Cooper and the slow bowling of Dean Dass and Paul Barker entered the fray. Lenny Cooper especially found the right line and length almost immediately and both Paul and Dean found elements of turn and bounce on a wicket that was starting to 'do a bit'.

In fact the rate of 7-an over had been reduced to just over 4 when Eastcote skipper and opening bat Paul Martin found it all too much and walked off the field after he made a 67-ball 50 which included 9-fours. Almost immediately after he'd 'left the building' Dean Dass bowled J Lotay for a painstaking 35 and when Rhodri James was bowled with just 5 balls of Paul McGee's first over the visitors were sat at 136 for 4 with 14 overs remaining.

Still Bar toiled away and wickets and in truth runs came at regular intervals as Lotay went for 14 off 38 balls and Bar started to sense a total they were capable of chasing but Justin Grainger, Eastcote's second overseas, this time 'Joburg' in South Africa player took the game away from them with 35 at better than a run a ball. To also have David Goodchild, an ex-Middlesex player coming in at 7 showed just how seriously the Middlesex Premier side were taking the game.

Unfortunately for Bar the last 5 overs went at 7 runs an over and the visitors had set Bar a total of 220 to win in 45 overs, one they were never likely to get near on a wicket that was offering steep bounce to the ball that was dug in. Bar had a mix and match side, and the order showed that as Mike Palmer and Paul Barker strode out to face the pumped up fielders.

It wasn't long before the writing was on the wall. Despite the rate being a healthy one, bar lost Mike Palmer (6) caught behind to a thick outside edge, Paul Barker clipped a half volley to the only man on the legside for 12 and Dean Dass was plumb in front for 4 and Bar were 57 for 3 in under 10 overs but in truth of those 57, 27 of them were extras as the bowling was wide and

erratic and couple that with a pitch that was doing more than it normally would, batting was at times a lottery.

With the flu-ridden Gavin Baker and Guy Thatcher nursing a badly bruised finger, there was not a lot in the hutch to pick from and in truth the collapse was no surprise. Luke Owers made 12 and in truth for me he can certainly play, but it's a hard game and Saturday was a steep learning curve; facing a bloke whose over 6 foot tall, played professionally, bowls a heavy ball and has all the chat to go with it, but despite getting hit he did get in behind the next one, so credit has to be given.

The rest of the boys didn't manage to put up much of a fight, although Haydn Rogers managed to swipe 11 to make sure the boys did creep past the three figures. The game ended in a soft manner with Haydn plumb in front to a slower Jeetan Patel delivery and the visitors had won at a canter by the margin of 103 runs.

For Eastcote, they face a very hard campaign. They will be matching themselves against the likes of Ealing, Winchmore Hill, Brondesbury and Hampstead week in, week out. They showed they have some very talented players within their club, but it was a one-sided affair as in truth Bar had 6 members of the expected league side and apart from Michael John and the retired Paul McGee, nobody else had even figured in a 2<sup>nd</sup> eleven league game, that was the gulf in class.

Next week sees the boys step up their pre-season fixture with the 1s playing St Albans at home and then travelling to Bishops Stortford in the Cockspur Cup on Sunday, with the winners travelling to Saffron Walden on Sunday May 13. The 2s under Greg Hodge get their first outing of the season travelling to St Albans and a mixture of 3s, 4s and 5s travel to St Margaretsbury in an exceedingly friendly fixture.

Despite the club getting a good pummelling by Eastcote, as they say in racing terms the boys next week will be all-the better for the run out last time and there were positives to be found from the game. Lenny Cooper bowled as well as he has for a fair time (2 for 10 from 6 overs), Paul Barker bowled with his usual accuracy (0 for 18 from 9 overs) and Dean Dass showed he can be effective with ball and another option (1 for 30 from 8 overs).

Hopefully though the availability will pick up after next weekend as from May 5, the club will need to find 55 registered league players and from what was on show on Saturday, then for me looks a long, long way away.

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

Regards  
Fred