

## **GALE BLOWS WEST HERTS AWAY**

### **Saturday**

**West Herts 166 all out off of 54.2 overs**

**Potters Bar 167 for 1 in 29.3 overs**

Bar stormed to the top of the table, on alphabetical order (arf, arf) with arguably their most convincing performance in years as they literally blew away West Herts in an one-sided league game at Park Avenue on Saturday.

After winning the toss and electing to bat first, the free scoring Neal Parlane who was the leading run scorer in New Zealand state cricket in the winter strode out to the wicket with fellow opener Waqas Chaudhry in confident manner.

It was vital Bar started well and they couldn't have started anymore impressively. Nick Walker took the new ball and put the ball at good pace just on or around off stump. Neal Parlane went after it like a shot and drilled a low and sharp slip chance to Dean Dass at second slip who held it with a great deal of ease considering the importance of the catch. 0 for 1 off just 1 ball, the main man in the hutch and Bar were off and running.

Ex-Leicestershire player Steve Clark was having a bit of 'battle' with his ex-County colleague Nick Walker but in the main played him well and was starting to look the class act that he is with an array of firm cover drives and on drives which soon had the scoreboard rattling on.

However at the other end it was far from the same. Chaudhry was in truth crabbing along and finding the accuracy of Nick a bit too much to handle as it took him 36 balls to compile a pretty painful 5 before he played too early on a short ball and ballooned it up to square leg where Nesan Jeyaratnam took a dolly of a catch. 43 for 2 and Steve Clarke was nicely and he was now joined by skipper Matt Smith.

After an excellent 9-over burst Nick Walker came out of the attack and West Herts got back in the game a little as Paul McGee was quickly brought into the attack and initially struggled to contain Clark as with the batter hitting 'down wind' was little more than a chip over the infield to find the boundary. Steve Clark posted his 50 in just 68 balls with 8 fours and a six in a fine innings which gave the hosts a chance of posting a decent total on a wicket that was far from bowler friendly.

However Adam Norman bowled well and soon removed skipper Matt Smith for just 10 as he got a ball to bounce a touch more and forced a juggled catch by keeper Guy Thatcher who was stood up. 78 for 3 and there was then a period where Bar sat in a bit and Steve Clark and Duncan Hodges started to fight back and the three figures was soon posted on the board as the rate increased.

With the hosts cruising somewhat, Nick Walker came back into the attack and bowling off of just 3 paces he soon pegged them back and inspired a mini collapse right on the lunchbreak. With West Herts 3 for 123, Duncan Hodges went for 18 as he spooned a catch to backward point where Nesan Jeyaratnam gleefully took it again off Nick and 2 balls later a suicidal attempted single from Craig Sanders saw him run out easily by Nesan saw West Herts go into lunch with heads down at 125 for 5 off of 39 overs from an entertaining first session.

In fairness the innings now relied even more on the shoulders of Steve Clark who batted beautifully for 119 minutes up to lunch as he was 81\* but was starting to run out of reliable partners.

Again like the start of play Bar started in great heart by removing teenager Will Jones a member of the Middlesex Academy for just 1 as he was adjudged leg before again to Nick Walker. Again, like the first session Bar had struck first ball. 125 for 6 was soon 138 for 7 as the vital wicket of Steve Clark came about by a fine low catch at cover by Nesan Jeyaratnam, his third of the game as well as a run out to give Nick his first 5-wicket haul for the club in what was turning out to be a marathon effort.

Steve Clark made a fine 89 from 140 balls, in an innings that lasted 139 minutes and contained a six and 12 fours. Fair play to him and if it wasn't for his technique and ability West Herts would have been shot out for 60.

So 138 for 7 and in truth it wasn't long before Bar had wrapped up the innings. Gurney went for an edgy 15, as he held out to Dean Dass off of Nesan Jeyaratnam as he started to bowl as we all know he can. Nelson gave Dean Dass catching practice at slip to make it 162 for 9 and when young Mark Richardson ran himself out in schoolboy fashion, Bar had been set 167 to win in a minimum 55 overs.

Of the bowlers, Nick Walker must take the plaudits as his 6 for 37 from a marathon 22 overs was a fine display. It's nice to see someone come in and bowl with aggression and the ability to not let batters just sit on the front foot all day is a fine spectacle. The rest of the bowlers did a good job with Will van der Maat again showing he has a great deal of potential as his 6 overs went for just 24 and Nesan Jeyaratnam bowled with the loop and control which was so sadly lacking in the cold and wet against Stevenage.

So 167 to win and Bar started to attack from the start and a flurry of boundaries by both Steve Gale and Nesan Jeyaratnam saw Bar off to a decent start. Steve Clark bowled with a great deal of rhythm and pace and he pulled a crackerjack of a delivery out of the hat to get rid of Nesan as the top of off peg was hit and Bar were 23 for 1.

This brought Lanka de Silva to the wicket and his lack of batting probably saw him give 2 relatively easy chances at 2<sup>nd</sup> slip and mid off but after that he got in the groove, saw off the new ball and started to play beautifully.

But it was Steve Gale who tucked into the bowling with gusto as he cut and pulled excellently and Bar were starting to cruise to victory. Milestones were coming as quick as the boundaries as Steve and Lanka brought up their 50 partnership in just 68 balls and with a blink of an eye Stevie G, eased to his maiden Bar league 50 off of just 73 balls and Bar were pretty much home and hosed.

West Herts skipper Matt Smith brought himself into the attack (rather later than I predicted) but Lanka de Silva took no notice of his undoubted ability as he struck him for four fours in his first 5 balls and he eased to his second successive '50' with an effortless six off of the bowling from David Nelson. Lanka who struggled initially got to his 50 in just 54 balls and this also brought up the pairs 100 partnership in just 120 balls.

With Bar easing to a second victory of the season and a place at the head of the table saw Steve Gale with just 12 required do it in 3 balls and Bar had romped to a 9 wicket win with more than

25 overs remaining. For West Herts, Steve Clark apart, were shocking and will just have to put it down to a bad day at the office. They are a lot, lot better than this but in truth as a side in the field, with the ball and more so with the bat we looked a very strong side. The hosts have had the Indian sign over us in the league on the last 4 encounters and we made them look average at the very best and over the last 4 or 5 years I cant recall them getting a hiding like this one.

What was good is the fact that we in the past would have struggled to get this total against a side of their ability. The same happened last year as 175 was 30 runs too much for us. We batted so clinically we gave them just 3 points from a game where they will be towards the top of the league come the end and a 22 point difference is vital.

The stand-in captaincy of Nick Walker as well is the difference in the way we play and is no indictment on what has happened in the past. There seems a belief that we don't always have to go on the hunt for wickets throughout the 60 overs or however many there are available. We have lost good positions in the past when we have had sides 5 or 6 down and then chucked away runs willy-nilly through over attacking. There isnt a great deal of difference from chasing 150 to chasing 180. Just a little more, professionalism and maybe a greater belief in players has been brought to the party and its making such a massive difference.

The 2s sadly slipped to their second successive defeats after back to back opening wins as they lost by 7 wickets to the Ampthill mob from Bedfordshire. After winning the toss and batting Bar had got to a good position at 140 for 2 with 11 overs remaining. This after 50's from both Addy Mehta and Tommy Coughlan, 38 from Mike Palmer and 21 from Dave Pett. However a lower middle order collapse ensued and to finish 198 for 8 from 53 overs would have been a disappointing finish.

However fair play to Ampthill as they romped home with 7 wickets in 3 overs remaining although they were helped by half a dozen or so catches going down. The old adage of catches win matches still applies.

The 3s lost on Saturday as they were beaten by a good chase by Hatfield Crusaders. Neil Raisborough's side made 183 from 47 overs, mainly bolstered by 60 from Mark Taylor who is trying desperately to play despite a broken toe and foot and another 40-odd from the run machine that is Bob Daley. Hats must to raised to the Crusaders who got home with 4 wickets intact and with 8 overs remaining. Still with 2 wins from 4 matches the 3s are in good touch after their poor campaign last year.

The 4s sadly made it 4 defeats on the bounce but they will be heartened by a far better display. They amassed 206 -7 from their 53 overs as there were half centuries for both John Erroll (55) and young Adam Titmuss (53). After having Ickleford 2s 6 down for 100, the hosts scampered home with a bit of comfort with 17 balls remaining.

Sadly after a good start the 5s are starting to struggle a little, although again their opponents are probably a division or two lower than they should be. The 5s made a credible 192 from 44.1 overs but Cockfosters cruised to the 30 points with a massive 9 overs to spare.

So next week sees the Bar entertain Hemel Hempstead, a team who on their day are a match for most but with them sat in the relegation spot its really a team we ought to beat. They do have some good batters and in Hemish Ilangeratne a chap who averages nigh on 85 every time we play against him.

The 2s travel to Preston in an effort to improve on the last two results to keep hot on the heels of the leading pack. The 3s travel to Abbots Langley to play their 2s and the 4s entertain Parkfield & Headstones second string with finally the 5s travelling to Hitchin 3s, a team that went up with them last season.

There is a **supposed** to be a friendly against Fives & Heronians on Sunday who recently turned the formbook upside down by beating Wanstead in the National. However nobody from their end has bothered their arse to advise us that they are playing in the next round so it looks highly unlikely the game goes ahead and Sunday sees the start of the Development League is Sunday where the boys go to Radlett.

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

Regards

Fred