

HAMPSTEAD TOO GOOD FOR UNDERSTRENGTH BAR

Sunday

Hampstead 300 for 6 off 45 overs

Potters Bar 235 all out in 44 overs

So at the first hurdle Bar have crashed out of the National ECB Competition after suffering a 65 run defeat at high flying Middlesex Premier League club Hampstead.

Coming up against a full strength Premier League side will always be a difficult proposition, but doing so with as many as 3 shy of the available players allowed to play in the competition was always going to be an uphill battle, with Tim Phillips being unable to play due to him being a contracted county player over the age of 23.

Bar skipper Len Cooper won the toss and inserted the hosts on a road of a pitch and with ex-Middlesex batters Paul Weekes and Shaun Levy opening up, it was always going to be a massive ask to keep the talented pair at bay. Sadly it wasn't to be. Both Weekes and Levy scored with relative ease on a batters dream of a pitch in early May and Bar were already scratching their heads at the quickening run rate.

The 50 came up in just 60 balls as Lenny struck the changes early giving Tanweer Sikandar a first bowl for the club but even with the constant bowling changes Levy and Weekes powered on. In the 18th over Shaun Levy brought up a tidy 50 which took just 62 balls and contained 7 fours. The next over saw the 100 run partnership between the two and Bar were staring down the barrel of chasing 270+ however Bar finally struck.

The bowling change saw Tom Coughlan come on and get the wicket of Paul Weekes for 46 as he bowled a short ball only for the veteran ex-county cricketer smack it straight to midwicket and Len Cooper held the catch. 108 for 1 was soon 113 for 2 as ex-Worcestershire and England 'A' spinner Shaftab Khalid enticed Akhtar to play far too early and dolly up an easy return catch. It was Shaffy's first 'competitive' wicket for the club and hopefully the first of many. Sadly though this brought in Sharma who played quite beautifully as he smacked his 3rd and 4th balls for maximums and the capture of the two quick wickets did nothing to halt the run charge.

The 150 came up at the end of the 26th over and 9 balls later the Levy / Sharma partnership completed their 50 run stand in just 32 balls. Shaftab apart, Bar had no answer to the free scoring batters and an enormous total was fast approaching.

The 200 arrived with over 11 overs remaining but soon after the milestone was reached Shaun Levy was dismissed for 96, leg before to Will van der Maat. He basically played all around a straight one and his 113 ball innings was ended. However another ex-county cricketer came to the wicket in the shape of Mark Harvey and he and Sharma quickened the rate even more.

The 50 stand came up in just 32 balls as Sharma (80) whizzed past 50 managing to clear the boundary more times than we beat the bat and thanks to some fine lusty hitting the hosts had managed to clamber up to the imposing and match winning score of 300 for 6 from their allocation of 45 overs.

Of the bowlers, Will van der Maat took 2 for 63 from his 9 overs and Adam Norman took 2 for 57 from 7 but the best bowler on show was without Shaftab Khalid whose 1 for 36 from 9 showed what a fine capture he will be for the club. His control against well set players was top drawer.

So Bar needing 6.88 runs per over opened up with Tanweer Sikandar and Adam Norman and against the Hampstead opening attack found it hard to penetrate the field. All the hosts did was to bowl the openers for 7 overs a piece for around 3 an over and the game was as good as won. That's what they did in truth and Bar were always second best.

Adam Norman was first to go for 8 with the score on 19 as he flashed a sharp slip catch to Ahktar which was gobbled up with ease. Tanweer Sikandar (18) then flashed an even sharper chance to gully which the excellent Sharma took easily.

This saw Shaftab Khalid and Jared Norman bat nicely together, with Jared especially playing some exquisite square and cover drives. Alas with 72 on the board, Jared suffered to a sharp piece of fielding at point and some pretty poor calling to be run out for 31 and the game as a contest was now as good as finished.

Len Cooper got a ball which he was adjudged caught behind for 14 and this saw Bar 111 for 4 with 23 overs gone, with the rate now 8.64 runs per over. However this now saw Bar's best period of the game as Shaftab was joined by Mike Palmer and they played nicely and found the gaps in the field and just for a brief spell had the hosts on the back foot.

Shaftab scored his maiden '50' in just 61 balls and the pair put on the first 50 partnership of the innings in just 54 balls with the evergreen Palmey outscoring his illustrious partner. In fact Mike for the first time since the old King was a boy was scoring a better than a run a ball. But with risks needing to be taken Hampstead just really needing a wicket to clinch the game.

The wicket and the partnership came to an abrupt halt as Mike Palmer was caught at deep midwicket for a fine 42 from just 39 balls in a knock which contained 4 fours and a straight pick n mix. Dave Breeze came and went as he made 8 in just 7 balls as the Bar 200 came up in the 37th over.

Alas Shaftab Khalid finally went for an excellent 76 from 77 balls as he was bowled by the energetic Dexter Thomas and with it Bar's slim chances of a shock disappeared. The late wickets of Tom Coughlan (9), Tom Pett (10) and Tom Rowlands (1) saw Bar finish 235 all out with 1 over left of their 45 over lot.

So a 65-run defeat is a disappointing result but given the opposition and only having 6 of your normal starting 11 playing its probably the result that could have been expected but **ALL** of the boys who played will be better for the run and will be up and ready for the rigours of the league campaign.

As for Hampstead they go on to play Wanstead and they have a decent shout of winning the group and progressing a long way in the competition.

HODGEYS BOYS IN A TOTAL SPIN AT WATFORD

Saturday

Watford 140 all out in 48.5 overs

Potters Bar 2s 102 all out in 30.3 overs

Bar slumped to a 38-run defeat against quite frankly a team they should have been looking to hammer and in truth they should have done.

The hosts won the toss on a two-paced pitch and from the outset struggled against the seam of Chris Boyce who bowled as well as he has done for many a year. Watford skipper Neal Sen was first to go caught behind off old Marlene for a big round one as he feathered a catch through to Paul Martin, one of four catches for the returning gloveman.

This brought in Watford's Tanzanian overseas starlet who started like a house on fire trying to hit the cover off the ball from ball one. That may have been the best course of action as Boycey was finding a fantastic bowling rhythm and accounted for Manzoor for 1 and skipper Greg Hodge got Prodder for 4. Chris then got the prized wicket of Kasim for 27 and the hosts were in all sorts of trouble at 36 for 4.

This then brought Riaz to the crease and he looked at ease with things and he and Sharpe took the score past the 50 mark. However Boycey forced another edge, this time a flying Paul Martin taking the catch and Sharpe was gone for 13 and at 52 for 5 Bar were in the pound seats. As the ears grew larger and the whiskers on the bunnies bristled in the warm sunshine, Mark Taylor and Adam Norman had reduced the hosts to 71 for 7.

Then farcically the hosts managed to add an amazing 69 runs to their meagre total to end 140 all out in the 49th over. In fairness Riaz batted well for his 48* from 125 balls, which contained 6 fours but to be honest when 10 and 11 looked as if they didn't know what end to hold the bat it was a disappointing hour or so in the field. Having said that Riaz gave a simple chance when the score was 120 for 9 which Greg Hodge will have nightmares over for a good few weeks and then two balls later the number 11 punched one to silly point only to be given a reprieve.

Of the bowlers Chris Boyce rightly took all the plaudits for his 4 for 30 from 12 overs as well as Mark Taylor who took 4 for 24 from 13 overs.

So Bar needed 141 to win in 51 overs and started with the opening pair of Mike Palmer and Tom Pett. A couple of early extravagant boundaries saw Bar up and running but Tom Pett was first to go as he missed a straight one which carried onto crash into his leg stump. 8 for 1 brought in Adam Norman and he and Mike Palmer looked in good touch, dispatching the bad ball to the fence and having no alarms.

However Adam went to the of-spin of Manzoor for 19 and when Mike Palmer got a questionable one for 12, Bar were 33 for 3. Maybe he should have punched the ball was one wags response. Tom Coughlan came and went for just 3 although even now I don't know how he was given out. Some say leg before, some say caught but it would have been nice if the umpires had informed the poor sods noting it all down.

When Mark Taylor smashed the ball to cover for him to take an easy catch Bar were 54 for 5 and really up against it and this got worse as Dave Breeze was soon back “dans le hutch” for 5 as the spinners Manzoor and Kasim had well and truly spun Bar into a web of poor shot selection.

Luke Owers was next to go as he tamely ‘slogged’ to midwicket for 7 and keeper Paul Martin was undone by the ball of the day as Kasim’s quicker one fizzed and turned and kissed the top of off stump. 64 for 8 and there was no hope of a victory. The last two wickets put on 38 as Dave Pett (16) went stumped and Chris Boyce went leg before for 15 including an all-run 5.

So Bar went down to a 38-run defeat, got 10 points whereas the hosts claimed the full 30 which in truth flattered them somewhat. However, despite there being some ‘average’ decisions go against them, players must show some class and not question the official. Yes it’s highly frustrating; you work all week, and then get a shocker etc. However rules are in place where teams who constantly question decisions will lose points. That’s not good for anyone.

As for the 3s and 4s, details are sketchy as I suffered hideously from sunstroke on Saturday and felt as if I was struck down with the old Swine Flu, thanks to a total lack of any cover whatsoever at Watford. Sitting in the direction of the blazing sun for 6 hours isn’t a great advert for concentration and when you chuck in screaming kids into the equation then it felt like a Saturday in Benidorm. Added to that a wobbly table and a chair which was as comfortable as a Ryan Air flight then I had a marvellous experience at a ground which 25 years ago held pre-World Cup Warm-Ups!

However Ben Scarisbrick’s tenure at the helm of the 3s started in great fashion as the boys thrashed last years Division 7 champions Tewin by 8 wickets. Thanks to 6 for 34 from Michael ‘Mamba Tunes’ John and wickets for Dan Brown, Dan Pett, Adam Titmuss and Alex Whitehouse shot the visitors out for just 140.

Opening up was Cherry Bob Daley who sped to 40 and Adam Titmuss who carried on from where he left off at Sawbridgeworth the week before. Adam went onto make a fine 65* and Matt Evans 13 and John Lewis 15* meant the boys won with over 20 overs remaining and a margin of 8 wickets.

As for the droopy drawers (the 4s) they had an exciting game with Monkey Island, sorry Monken Hadley. The hosts scored a highly credible 184 from their 53 overs. The Bar finished 6 short, 9 wickets down which sounded a great game and one that will wet the boys appetites for the season.

Next week sees league action start for the 1s as they travel to fellow promoted side Farnham Royal who fight out of the Slough area. The 1s are full strength and will give league debuts to Tim Phillips, Shaftab Khalid, Tanweer Sikandar, Chris Swainland and Chris Lagana. Hopes are high of a great season although it will certainly be hard work.

The 2s entertain Broxbourne and it will be the last weekend the scoreboard will be seen in its current state before it undergoes major construction work on Monday. The 2s will also be buoyed by the return to action of Paul McGee and Ollie Coughlan.

The 3s travel to Broxbourne’s second string hoping to build on an opening day win and the 4s entertain Rickmansworth 3s. The weekend also sees the start of the league season for the 5s, as they play host to Old Elizabethans 3s.

Finally a mention has to go out to Neil Raisborough who after some 25+ years at the club has called it a day and has moved to play closer to his Chelmsford home. Neil started off as an opening batsman in the 2s but thankfully those lofty ambitions were ditched for years as the 1s opening bowler with Jeff Hackett. He was part of the side which won the old Selectaglaze League in 1985. Neil then went onto bowl over after over for the 2s and three, captaining both sides

Have a great week
Fred