

NORMAN THE SAVIOUR AS BAR STORM 15 POINTS CLEAR

Saturday

North Mymms 207 all out off 54.1 overs

Potters Bar 212 for 7 in 54 overs

A nerve jangling win over local rivals North Mymms enabled the boys to storm 15 points clear of Welwyn Garden City and 18 clear of West Herts in this topsy turvy league campaign.

On a beautiful day at Home Farm, on a wicket that looked like the neighbouring A1, Bar skipper Len Cooper called incorrectly and North Mymms had first use on a pitch that looked like a dream for the batters. The boys had to hit the straps straight away otherwise the hosts could quite easily post a score that would bat Bar out of the game.

After an extremely leisurely warm-up Kash Weeraratne and Gavin Baker took the new ball and almost straight away Bar were off and running as Gavin bowled a peach of a ball to Kyle Claxton of which he nibbled at and a regulation catch taken by Guy Thatcher was pouched. 3 for 1 after 11 balls and Bar were away but there wasn't the same intensity as there had been in previous games. We looked a little lethargic, casual and a side that looked mid-table and the season had finished. To be honest Mymms took advantage and piled on the runs in an entertaining opening session.

The highlight was arguably Umpire Hall throwing some particularly odd shapes as a beetle took great interest in his inner ear and 6 minutes of comic head butting of the ground ensued. But after the commotion, Mymms batters, Rhys Wynne and Mark Saxby, who books in for bed and breakfast against our bowling, looked at home on the easy paced pitch.

Both players found the attack to their liking and the pair soon passed the 50 partnership mark (61 balls) and the Bar attack was literally crying out for a change of pace. It didn't come as still the boundaries were being struck and the pace attack looking a little impotent. Wynne struck 8th four to bring up his 50 off of 72 balls and thankfully 3 balls later he edged to gully where Jared Norman took the catch off Kash Weeraratne. 103 for 2 was soon 104 for 3 as the prized wicket of Mark Saxby was snaffled as Kashie beautifully got a ball to bounce and move off the seam and the Mymms number 3 edged tamely to Guy Thatcher and the keeper took his second catch of the morning.

Thankfully, the slow bowlers started to appear and although the ball not exactly ripping through the pitch, the rate slowed and more control was given. Mymms lost a 4th wicket just before lunch as Hugh Cornwell gave Kash his 3rd wicket of the morning and his 30th of the season as Nesan Jeyaratnam took a really sharp chance at second slip. So lunch arrived with the hosts sat 120 for 4 off of 31 overs. Their hopes rested on the shoulders of Trinidadian Kwesi Roy.

The overseas star of Mymms took Bars attack to the cleaners after lunch as he and skipper Simon Clements quickly upped the rate and it was clear the only way to stem the flow of runs was to have spin at both ends. It was a strangely out of sorts Lenny Cooper who couldn't see this and finally when spin from both ends was deployed it was just 14 overs for Bar to rip out the last 6 wickets.

Paul McGee worked his magic after just 8 balls as he found the edge of Clements bat which Jared Norman grovelled on the turf and just managed to cling on. That was 164 for 5 and the vital

wicket of Mr. Roy (I swear that was Derek Fowlds in Basil Brush) came with the score on 177 as Paul McGee forced a hideous swipe which lobbed tamely in the air and Matt Webb took the catch at extra cover. Kwesi Roy for me looked a fine batsman and his 50 contained 9 fours and came in just 65 balls.

Bar then pretty much took wickets at vital times and Paul McGee immediately accounted for Nicol and 3 lbw's from Paul Barker accounted for Black, Rhys Carter and Donovan Miller. Bar had bowled out Mymms for 207 with 5 overs left of their 60 overs allocation. So Bar had 55 overs to score 208 which considering the state of the pitch it should have been a cakewalk but it was far from that. Of the bowlers, Paul McGee took 3 for 15 from 7 overs, Paul Barker took 3 for 50 from 15 overs and Kash Weeraratne took 3 for 47 from 12. 6 for 65 from 22.1 overs from the spinners for me says it all. This was not a wicket suited to quicker bowlers.

Mymms opened up with the slow left arm of Danny Duggan and the off-breaks of Mark Saxby and Bar like as always simply allowed these two fine slow bowlers to find their rhythm straight away and bowl at us. The run rate was at a snails pace and what was worse Bar had lost Matt Webb who went in soft fashion, caught and bowled off Duggan for 6 and Bar were 1 for 7 after 7 overs.

This brought in Jared Norman to the wicket and he slowly started to impose himself on the slow bowling but poor old Nesan Jeyaratnam was being watchful and found the rotation of the strike very difficult, but the good thing was he didn't throw his wicket away and stuck at it. The occasional bad ball did arrive and the two batters put a 50 partnership on the board in 119 balls. Thankfully though an error from the Mymms skipper saw the rate increase as he took the new ball 4 overs before the scheduled tea break and hence brought on Donovan Miller and Kwesi Roy.

Miller bowled 2 overs of filthy fast medium and disappeared for 15 and Roy looked short of what would be required to restrict the Bar run chase which was slowly starting to gain momentum. Tea duly arrived and Bar were 75 for 1 from 30 overs. The equation was simple, 133 from 25 overs at a rate of 5.32 runs per over. Jared was sat 40* and Nesan Jeyaratnam 28* but we still had the animals set to come in 2 by 2.

Unfortunately straight after tea Nesan Jeyaratnam perished as he got a ball which popped off a length and went for a 104 ball innings of 30. This though brought in Kash Weeraratne to the wicket and he tucked into the lacklustre and at times puzzling spell of bowling from Kwesi Roy. As good as Mr Roys batting was, his bowling was the opposite. Kash thumped him to all parts and Mymms were looking down the barrel. He didn't learn that short pitch half trackers weren't the order of the day and his spell after tea of 5 overs 1 for 47 gave the impetus back to the Bar.

Jared Norman completed his 50 off of 75 balls but at the other end Kash was finding the boundary with ease and in just 15 balls he had already sped to 27. Still Mr Roy (boom, boom) kept pitching it short, still Kash kept pulling him for four and this on a lush at times sluggish outfield.

Unfortunately Bar lost Kash Weeraratne as he hit the ball out to deep extra cover. Two runs had been completed, which brought up his 50 (off 30 balls) and hideously Kash attempted a third on a misfield and was run out by a good foot contrary to Bertie Anderson assessment of he was yards in. I myself blame the copious amounts of lager swilled during the day. 155 for 3 meant the chase was down to 53 off of 14.2 overs.

Lenny Cooper came in and swiped three lovely boundaries, but he was soon caught brilliantly by Rhys Carter for 13 and the loss of the pinch hitting of Sir George for just 2 meant Bar were starting to look nervous and instead of playing the ball into the many gaps available the big shots were being sought and were not coming off.

The big wicket of Jared Norman arrived at 193 as he went stumped by a good 2 yards by Neil Black as the spin had worked again. Jazzy's 77 came off of 108 balls and contained a six and 6 fours. The almost immediate departure of Paul Barker (bowled for 2) meant Bar needed 12 off of 15 balls with the tail and an injured Gavin Baker left in the hutch.

Dave Breeze whose 30 in the previous game with Mymms arguably won the spoils was showing his cool and class and he got bat on ball and got us to the line, finishing it in fine style with a huge pick and mix over deep midwicket. This was a fine, fine win and although the loss of wickets and the struggle in getting to the target I don't think anyone will disagree it was a fair result.

So with just 5 league matches remaining, we need 116 points to win the league. With Welwyn and West Herts meeting on the last day of the season it should be less than that total but we must keep selecting the **strongest** side to win matches as we will have to keep winning games rather than hoping others will slip up.

The 2s maintain their good form of late as they remarkably beat title chasing Berkhamstead by 4 wickets with a massive 10 overs remaining. Luke Owers 6 for 46 enabled the boys to chase 191 for victory which is still a decent score against a 'good' 1st XI. After a rocky start, losing Charlie Hodge, Mike Palmer and Dave Pett it took a marvellous hard hitting 86 from Ajith Walallawita to give Bar the chance / glimmer of victory. It did however need a fine, fine innings from young Luke Owers, aided by a fine cameo of 19 from Tom Pett to bring Greg Hodge's side a famous scalp.

The 3s came unstuck against Southgate Compton but managed to accumulate 15 points, which in the bigger picture isn't the worst result. The boys managed to rack up 201-6 from their 53 overs. Sammy Jayakodye finished 67*, Mr Ramaweta 47 was aided by 35 from 'Cherry' Bob Daley. The visitors managed to get the runs required with 13 balls remaining with only Neil Raisborough 2-47 looking like halting the promotion chargers, although they will point to a big shout for a catch behind that was turned down.

The 4s got a bit of a hiding in truth as they lost to the runaway leaders Ickleford, who I believe have merged with Ickleford Cricketers who were some 5 leagues above where Ickleford 2's ply their trade. The 4s crabbed their way to 149 for 8 from 53 overs. Charlie Scutt struck a fine 50 in vein and it took just 30 overs for the hosts to claim their 9th win of the season for the loss of just 1 wicket.

The 5s though have nigh on gained promotion and big congratulations have to go to Rob Anderson and Colin Titmuss who have together masterminded the promotion charge. Facing the side in 2nd place, they restricted Hatfield 3s to 175 and the boys tapped them off with 2 overs remaining thanks to another cavalier 38 from the Big T, Jamie Trust. The rest of the side as all year batted sensibly and clocked up their 7th win in 8 matches. Technically it's a 100% record as the tie with old Elizabethans had been won a good over before the end of the game and thanks to some pretty piss poor addition the boys ended up having a tied game.

Next week sees the 1s play Hemel Hempstead who themselves have managed to find a fair bit of form and have comfortably secured another season in the division. It took a 23-ball 50 from

Mark Taylor in June to secure an unlikely victory and it will again be a stern test from a side that play their cricket hard and fair. They come into this game on the back of a 100+ run over West Herts, so we write these fellas off at our peril.

The 2s travel to mid-table Northwood knowing that 4th place is right up for grabs as they now trail Cockfosters by just 8 points. With availability not too clever it's going to be hard but confidence is sky high and the boys must go looking to continue to keep the pressure on the teams above them.

The 3s are in for a hard time this week as they travel to Preston and face their second string. The hosts have won their last 4 completed games and the 3s haven't won 4 on the trot since last season and the last time the boys pulled a win out of the fire was back at the start of June. But all the boys need is to win 2 matches and another year in Division 6 can be achieved.

The 4s who suffered a big loss entertain Knebworth Parks 5th eleven who in fairness are down the bottom half of the table. The 4s are sat in 3rd place but face a challenge from Luton Town & Indians but if they keep their heads they can move up pyramid for the second successive season.

Finally the 5s travel to Hitchin to face their 3rd XI in a winner takes all battle. A win could give the boys the league title which is exactly how I called it at the start of the season. Hitchin are second, so maybe the plan of not losing to them ought to be the first hurdle and then see how you go but I am sure strengthened with the return of Robert John Anderson, the boys will be okay.

Other than that there is not a lot to report other than the first XI managed to claim another win in the Chess Valley league as they disposed of Kenton. Hats are tipped at a gaudy angle as we say well done to Tom Pett and Greg Hodge who made their maiden first XI fifties in a high scoring farce of a game.

So until next time, have a good week, the future is bright, the futures Potters Bar

Regards
Fred