

INEPT PERFORMANCE LEAVES BAR OUT OF TITLE RACE

Saturday

Hemel Hempstead 185 all out in 54 overs

Potters Bar 117 all out in 32.2 overs

After last weeks excellent showing against Welwyn Garden City, Bar followed up last weeks great efforts with a performance that would have been at home in last years shambolic season.

In conditions more akin to a winters day, Bar won the toss on a surface that would offer runs at a healthy rate and asked relegation threatened Hemel to strap the pads on and have first use of the green looking pitch.

As the wind howled around the ground and the rain clouds gathered, Hemel got off to a steady start with Kash Weeraratne beating the bat with great regularity but in all fairness, Hemish Ilergeratne got in behind it and when the opportunity arose, he struck the ball in confident fashion and found the boundary boards with regularity.

Kash was starting to find the right length and the ball was carrying through at both a decent height and with good 'wheels' and whilst defeating Clark especially almost at will, Kash had more hard luck by bowling him neck and crop only for 'The Moon' correctly called him for overstepping.

However it took a change of ends and a steady shower of rain to fall before Bar got a breakthrough. 47 runs had been put on and Kash had finally managed to get an edge off of Clark's bat and Dean Dass held a smart low catch at first slip. This brought a delay for the worsening rain and upon the re-start it wasn't long before the second wicket soon followed when Hemel's overseas player Ricky Mohamed was tamely caught low down at mid-on for 0 and with the conditions returning to those more akin to a day out in the Falklands, Bar were back in the pound seats at 54 for 2 in the 19th over.

This then brought Hemel skipper Giles Berry to the wicket and he winkled 14 and helped Ilergeratne through to his 50, which took 84 balls and he struck 10 lovely boundaries. With lunch on the horizon, after yet another break for rain, Hemel lost the wicket of Berry for 14 to a rank long hope from Nesan and the visitors went into the break at 87 for 3 off 28 overs with 29 overs left of the reduced allocation.

Still Ilergeratne went on, taking the attack to the Bar bowlers and he and Matt Potton put on 43 in quick time, again being disrupted by a third break for rain and for me the Bar were slowly letting the game drift away with bowling that although was neat and tidy, but showed no real pressure and although the fielding in parts was good again for me there wasn't the same intensity as there was at Welwyn, where quite honestly we were excellent.

Paul Barker was finally brought into the attack with 20 overs left of the Hemel innings and with the score on 110 for 3 there was a decent chance that Hemel could make Bar chase a total around the 200-mark.

Paul McGee finally broke the 4th wicket stand as he tempted Potton to run down the wicket and was made to look rather silly as the ball spun sharply and Scott Fraser soon whipped off the bails and he was run out for 17. 132 for 4 was soon 139 for 5 as Ilergeratne finally went to a casually

taken catch at long off by Jared Norman and the talented opener had finally gone for 81 in a 139 ball stay and Bar were again back in the game.

However to be fair, the Hemel lower order batted sensibly and J Potton 16, I Nawaz 10 and to a lesser extent Duncan Howard 9 meant Bar were chasing 186 for victory in a minimum of 46 overs. Paul Barker ended up taking 4 for 31 as he cleaned up the tail and Paul McGee took 4 for 73 in 19 overs although for me I thought the pitch, which was offering turn maybe ought to have been looking for figures better than those attained.

With conditions grey, a pitch offering a bit of bounce and a helpful wind, I cannot understand why we only bowled 19 overs out of 54 of seam. Lenny Cooper bowled just 5 overs, Charlie Hodge bowled just 4 and started to get things right after a nervous start and Kash Weeraratne bowled 10 good overs and his figures of 1 for 20 deserved better. Yes the pitch was offering slow turn, but surely we would have been better off putting the Hemel boys under pressure a little more as it was clear for everyone to see that they were struggling to lay a bat on Kash?

Anyway, Bar needed 186 for the 25-points and they started with a positive mind set and opening up with Gavin Baker and the pinch-hitting of Scott Fraser, however the start wasn't great and we were soon under pressure.

Scott Fraser, despite surviving a massive shout for leg before the ball before, offered no-shot and was given out lbw for 4 and Dean Dass who has been in fantastic form powerfully drove back a sharp return catch to Howard who gleefully held it and through the ball miles in the air in jubilation. Bar were 12 for 2 after just 20 balls and although runs were free flowing, so were the wickets.

Hemel lost veteran seamer Pete Waterman due to what looked like a pulled calf muscle and with Kash Weeraratne smacking the cover off the ball with regularity Bar had recovered to 44 for 2 in just the 9th over. However although Bar were playing some fine attacking shots, it was clear to see the way they were going about things was more like a 20/20 game and Kash Weeraratne (28) perished to a good catch at a wide long-on off of slow left-arm Nick Hodgins 5th ball. 49 for 3 turned into 49 for 4 as Gavin Baker tamely fished at a turning ball next up from Hodgins and Bar were still 137 runs away from victory and the wicket had started to gradually turn and bounce with greater regularity.

Skipper Lenny Cooper joined Jared Norman and briefly Lenny took the attack to the Hemel boys as he scored 18 in just 25 balls but he perished 4 overs before the tea break to a hideous shot and when the interval arrived Bar were perilously placed at 88 for 5 needing a further 98 to win off of a minimum 26 overs. However in the 44 minutes after the tea break, Bar succumbed weakly to an array of poor shots and to be honest a lack of application and more worryingly a lack of technique, which is sad considering all the good and hard work in a good deal of the previous 13 league games.

Jared Norman (16) went to a sharp low catch at midwicket, Mike Palmer (7) went in the same fashion only to an easier catch and Nesan Jeyaratnam went caught at slip and all of a sudden Bar had gone from 92 for 5 to 103 for 8 and the defeat was closing in and the faint chance of putting pressure on Radlett had well and truly galloped off into the distance.

It wasn't long before Paul Barker was adjudged leg before for 9 and when Charlie Hodge was bizarrely caught off the back of his bat for 5, Bar were dismissed for a paltry 117 in just 32.2 overs. Bar had lost by 68 runs and it now looks like Bar will have to settle for 4th place or at a

push 3rd place and the boys must now focus entirely on the forthcoming Becker Cup game at West Herts.

As for Hemel, they bowled okay, but I cannot help but think they were assisted by some dreadful shot selection and a cavalier approach by Bar when at the end of the day I'm sure had we had played proper cricket, similar to the Becker chase against North Mymms then the 4 runs an over target should have been well within our capabilities.

One thing I must add was the standard of umpiring on Saturday as for arguably the first time this season, they were both excellent. No fuss, no embarrassing gaffs, just good efficient officiating and that must be applauded as it's a part of the game that often gets overlooked and taken for granted. It's certainly something I couldn't do, as for me the boys are always going to upset someone throughout a long day and they aren't in the main appreciated by those who play the game.

Saturday wasn't to be any better for the 2s as they lost by 6 wickets to relegation threatened Flitwick in a high scoring encounter which saw Mark Taylor score a fine 114. Bar batted first after being stuck in and scored 237 for 8 off of their 53 overs. Sir George batted beautifully and in trademark fashion he brought up the 3 figures with a massive blow which cleared the ropes by some distance. Georgie was assisted by Addy Mehta who again scored 60-odd before boredom got the better of him and he was dismissed again when another three figure score was staring him full in the face.

I would have thought 238 would have been out of the hosts talents but fair do's to Flitwick and their skipper who smashed 146 not out although he was helped by some less than decent fielding and although details are sketchy as I slipped off into the night, I understand catching was not of the highest standard and the hosts got the 238 target with 18 balls remaining.

The 3s suffered another heavy defeat against another title chasing side, who at this moment in time they keep seeming to meet. Old Albanian 2s made 199 for 9 from 49 overs thanks to Rupert Pyrah's 4 wickets although at a cost of over 100, which I am led to believe it's the first time he's broken the magical 100 figure. The total was always going to be a testing one and despite 40-odd from Rob 'Cherry Bob' Daley the boys were bowled out for 111 and an 88 run defeat leaves the boys looking nervously over their shoulder.

The only success of the weekend was again in the 4s – however they managed a 9th win in 10 matches thanks to Hertford being unable to raise a side. With the return of Ian Breeze next week, I'm sure they will be looking to making it 10 out of 11.

Next week sees the clubs biggest week since the last big week as they have 4 big clashes in just 5 days. Thursday sees the boys in the 20/20 playoff against South Hampstead (6pm start at home) with the winners heading off on Bank Holiday Monday for the regional finals at Sunbury. Saturday sees the boys travel to Hoddesdon, where they will be seeking revenge from a heavy defeat in June where I don't think I'd be wrong in saying we were never quite at the races that day.

Sunday is the biggie as the 1s travel to HCPL side West Herts in the Semi Final of the Becker Transport Cup. It's a massive occasion and I am sure there will be a massive travelling contingent that makes the trip to Watford and for me the boys will need all the encouragement they can get as they go into the game as underdogs – saying that though, the boys have saved arguably their best cricket for the Becker Cup and have looked every bit as good as anyone else in this competition and we have already dispatched Sawbridgeworth, North Mymms and Stevenage

with three professional performances and again I have no worries that the boys will do themselves justice and cause a surprise and hopefully, cause the other counties premier sides to look enviously as the boys step out onto the field at Shenley on Sunday 10th September to do battle in the final, which will be a first for our great club.

The 2s entertain Ampthill and are set to include the returning Mark Ilott and skipper Dave Pett to the ranks who will no doubt replace Tom and John Pett, who have been seduced by their mistress, Arsenal FC.

The 3s entertain Hertford 3s in a game that they must look to win as they aren't quite out of the woods yet and the 4s look to make it 10 out of 11 as they travel to Stansted Abbots to meet St Margaretsbury 3s where there maybe an appearance of 'Coco the Clown' and his exploding car.

There is also a game at Potters Bar on Monday where the boys entertain Combemere School who are on tour from Barbados. The boys will all be highly talented chaps and we will need to be at our best to beat them and I'm sure if the sun shines there will certainly be plenty of Caribbean cricket on show.

To all who play in the nest 7 or 8 days, all the best fellas. Lets hope this time next week the 4s are promoted, the 2s and 3s have secured their division status for another year and we are all planning how we are to get to Shenley in the second week in September.

Remember, the futures is bright the future is Potters Bar

Regards
Fred