

TWO OUT OF TWO FOR BAR AS THEY HIT TOP

Saturday

Sawbridgeworth 133 for 9 off 41 overs

Potters Bar 136 for 3 in 28.1 overs

What a start for the Bar as they comfortably beat Sawbridgeworth in a rain ruined clash at The Walk on Saturday with a 7 wicket win which pushes them 17 points clear of the top of the league.

After heavy overnight rain, coupled with some pretty heavy downpours, there was no sight of any play before lunch and to be honest if it wasn't for the hard work of Dave Lawrence and a good many of the Bar's players, there wouldn't have been any play whatsoever. However after much debate from the two umpires we finally got under way at 2.15pm.

In a rain reduced match as I've said on a couple of occasions the winning of the toss is so vital it can basically win you the game. Whoever wins it will insert and chase, knowing full well it will take a Herculean effort from the bowling side to bowl you out in around 30 – 35 overs. At this level it just doesn't happen. The coin went up, the Sawbridgeworth captain called wrongly and Lenny had no hesitation in asking the visitors to bat first.

On a soaking wet pitch, saturated outfield, the script was set for a stodgy start with scoring set to be difficult however openers Hull and Wilson paid no attention to this and attacked the bowling of Kaushayla Weearatne and Andy Colquhoun with utter contempt as they raced out of the blocks. Balls were disappearing through the covers, over the top of mid-off and mid on and it wasn't long, just 43 balls in fact, before the scoreboard had 50 on it.

Still Sawbo ploughed on and it needed the guile and a change of pace from Paul McGee and Paul Barker to not only halt the scoring but to rip the heart out of the visitors batting. However what I couldn't understand was the fact that Sawbridgeworth had raced to 70 for 0 off of 14.2 overs, had 26 and-a-bit overs remaining and had they had batted sensibly at 4 an-over they would have posted a total in the region of around 180, but they played more shots akin to a 20/20 charity bash.

Hull went for a fine 32 after he hit a shell to mid-on where Kash held a fine low catch, Wilson was out leg before sweeping and Rudkin went first ball to a catch behind and Marshall played a hideous shot and all of a sudden from being in a strong position of 70 for 0, they were now 76 for 4. It wasn't long before the innings was in the bag as Burrell 4 and Amies 1 had the visitors struggling at 87 for 6 and if it hadn't have been for the sensible innings made by Matt Birch 37 in 54 balls Sawbo's mediocre score of 133 would not have been set.

In all fairness to the visitors, the conditions at times during their innings were quite frankly akin to Geri Halliwell putting a sensible sentence together, ridiculous, and I simply cannot understand why the umpires stayed out on the field in driving wind and poring rain when it took them an age to decide on what time we would start, much of it in bright sunshine? There was an occasion when Matt Birch and Keiran Morgan walked off the field as the rain started to hammer down and again in **my** opinion the Umpires should have offered the conditions to the batsman as to be honest you'd moan if you played football in weather we occasionally experienced. (Lets put it down to early season enthusiasum) The umps didn't do it, the Bar boys stayed on the field, well

you would when you had the visitors well and truly behind the nine-ball and back they came, after a brief delay.

Thanks to a magnificent spell of bowling from Paul Barker 4 for 21 off of 16 overs and Paul McGee 4 for 56 off of 17 overs, Bar had restricted the down-trodden hosts to 133 for 9 and with a turning wicket and a fine slow left arm bowler in Ryan Cunningham in the Sawbo ranks, I had a feeling this was still going to be a big ask for the boys.

For the first ten overs I was to be proved right. Nesan Jeyaratnam opening up was caught on the crease and was out leg before for just 5, Scott Fraser followed in quick fashion for a duck and when Jared Norman had been shown the way, again LBW for 7 and Bar were under the kosh at 3 for 32 and the game was well and truly in the balance.

However Bar had Kash Weeraratne at the wicket and joined by skipper Lenny Cooper Bar still sat in the pound seats but as the bowlers Cunningham and more so Morgan started to tire the pressure began to lift as the '50' partnership came in 64 balls and Kash brought up his second successive '50' in 52 balls and Bar were steered home with 35 balls to spare and with 7 wickets and more so Mike Palmer, Ollie Coughlan and Paul Barker still left at their disposal.

Kash ended 80* off of 73 balls with 11 fours and 3 sixes and yet again was brilliantly supported by Lenny Cooper who made another easy on the eye 44* in just 53 balls and these two have now put on a second successive unbeaten 100 + run partnership.

Bar now sit 17 points clear of second place Stevenage at the top of the tree and it made me giggle when a few people within the camps of Sawbridgeworth and mainly Hertford have mentioned that we are a 1-man team. I think that is rather unfair as we had 2 spinners that took 8 for 77 in 33 overs with a ball resembling a bar of soap, skipper Lenny Cooper has made 2 unbeaten scores in the 40's and some of the teamwork in the field, particularly against Winchmore Hill and Hertford was a joy to watch. Yes, I grant you Kash is a top player and has made a dramatic start for us, but cricket is a team game and he is no more important than Ryan Cunningham is to Sawbridgeworth (who has played top cricket in the Caribbean) Aaron Laraman from Welwyn Garden who has played first class cricket as recently as last year, Shane Burger from Radlett who has played state cricket in South Africa and I could go on and on. I am afraid the words grapes and sour spring to mind and be indicated that both teams dropped Kash on very few in both games mmmmm. Moral is; don't expect a free beer from your bowler if you drop Kash on the floor.

The twos on the other hand are struggling to get their first win and found themselves on the wrong end of a dour draw against Reed. Having lost the toss, skipper Dave Pett saw his men in the field on a surprisingly dry pitch but thanks to some pretty ordinary bowling Bar saw themselves chasing 201 to win in just 34 overs.

After the pinch hitting of Michael John 36 and Johnny Petty 21 saw Bar recover from a slow start but then some nagging bowling and strange field settings saw Bar limp to a miserable 140 for 7 and a fewer point total to many sides who had been involved in abandoned games.

Rather predictably due to the hideous weather the 3s at Cockfosters, 4s and 5s (both down the school) were both called off early on Saturday morning, however many did ask if North Enfield had been consulted first and they all collect 10 points for the abandonment. Due to some heavy rain on Sunday, on top of the deluge on Saturday it came as no surprise that the game at home to Hatfield Hyde was predictably called off as well.

Next week sees the 1s travel to Radlett in what is set to be a real cracker of a game. Radlett have always had the Indian sign over the boys until a grey afternoon in July last year when the boys chased down a generous target of 260-odd and beat the hosts. Lenny Cooper will be hoping for more of the same but its game like this where we will see just how serious a title contender we really are.

Dave Pett's men entertain Old Albanian at the Walk, in what is another hard test for the boys. This year they will find wins hard to come by and will really have to play well to earn them but they do have a talented bunch of players and it just seems to me they need to click into gear as a team rather than in ones and twos and the wins will come.

Dave Rocks geezers entertain Radlett 4s at the school, Ian Breeze's fourth eleven travel to Welwyn Garden City which will really test them and finally Steve Moore's men have a break from the league and entertain Hemel Hempstead 6s in a friendly, again down the school.

A great win in the end for the ones and we have really hit the ground running after a good pre-season where we have slowly built up a good momentum and in the main playing some good cricket and the sort of cricket that had certainly been sadly missing over the last two years.

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

Regards
Fred