

## **BAR THWARTED BY THE RAIN AT HODDY**

### **Saturday**

**Potters Bar 283 for 9 in 58 overs**

**Hoddesdon 162 for 9 wkts in 40 overs**

Potters Bar were unable to force a victory in an entertaining encounter at a damp Lowfield on Saturday, where thanks to several stoppages for rain, it left a lop-sided game almost going Bars way.

After a night of heavy rain in Hoddesdon and finally arriving seeing a soaked wicket, it was odds-on the side who won the toss would stick the other side in and win the game as the wicket was a seam bowlers dream. Low and behold we lost the toss, got stuck in but the boys gave a great account of themselves and nearly pulled off an unlikely victory.

After 6 overs though it wasn't looking too clever as both Mike Palmer (caught behind) and Gavin Baker (clean bowled) both for 6, were soon in the pavilion and at 2 for 15 we were already behind the 8-ball. This brought Dean Dass and Scott Fraser to the crease and their attacking instincts soon put the Hoddy attack to the sword and got Bar back in the hunt.

Dean attacked anything too full and soon took advantage of the quick and rather small outfield and Scott who has scored nigh on all of his runs away from home soon settled in and played with a great deal of application and sense as he waited for the bad ball and dispatched it with little hassle.

The pair soon put on 50 in just 44 balls and Deano completed his third league 50 in five starts hitting three sixes (one of them would have cleared any arena in world cricket) and 5 fours and the 100 partnership was completed by the pair in even time and as lunch was nearing, like the rain clouds, Bar were in the pound seats at 136 for 2 heading into the final over before the lunch break.

Alas not for the first time this season, Dean, when well set on 74 lost his middle pole to Owais Yousuf and Bar went into lunch sat at 138 for 3 off of just 29 overs. As the players started to leave the field, this was the cue for the rain to fall and all after a delayed resumption the game had been reduced to a 58 / 48 over contest.

Scott Fraser completed his third league 50 of the season with another of many dabs through third man and with the small boundaries tempting Kash to again prove his worth, Bar were in a dominant position in the game with a total of 300 looking a real possibility. The wicket was now starting to turn, slowly admittedly but with the ball stopping this was starting to create problems for the batters.

Slow left arm bowler Steve Coleman accounted for Scott Fraser who was bowled around his legs for a fine 56 and when Jared Norman was kidded by a long hop that stopped almost in its tracks, Bar were 177 for 5 and it needed Kash Weeraratne and Lenny Cooper to bat well to enable a defensible total.

Kash brought up his 50 in fine style with a powerful slap over extra cover and Lenny blasted a quick-fire 25 including a six, disturbing Mrs Miggins in the flats overlooking the ground. However, although runs were coming at a healthy rate, wickets were being lost. Kash Weeraratne

went for 50, Lenny Cooper 25, Dave Breeze first ball and Nesan Jeyaratnam for 12 and it needed a rapid 32 not out by Paul Barker off of just 26 deliveries to enable Bar to set a challenging target of 284.

Alas rain ruined any chance of Hoddesdon winning the game as two rain breaks took 8 overs off of their already reduced allocation, leaving them 40 overs with a rate of over 7 runs per over, which is simply not obtainable at this level of cricket.

Bar started off with the old ball and got a wicket in the first over as Paul McGee enticed Curtis to swish at a wide one and Jared Norman took a sharp slip catch. At the wicket was youngster Rhys Wynne and the talented South African Matt Harris who started to attack and it took a ball that turned and bounced from Paul Barker to rid the threat of Harris as he looped a catch to first slip where Dean Dass held it and when Nesan Jeyaratnam bowled Wynne all ends up the hosts were out of the chase and playing resolutely for a draw.

Still though Bar probed and despite some dogged defence by Balkham wickets still fell as Coutts and Coleman went in quick succession and when the new ball was taken it livened up proceedings and with three overs remaining a tame ending was averted as Paul Barker took his third wicket of the match to a tumbling catch by Mike Palmer and in Weeraratne's last over he had Handy caught behind and Byrne clean bowled leaving 7 balls at the last pair, which in truth they duly managed to play out with little to no alarms.

Bar claimed 16 points for the days work and clawed back the difference on third place Stevenage who they face at home in two weeks time.

The 2s had a high scoring game at home to high flying Ampthill at The Walk. The visitors scored 220 for 7 off of the full allocation of 53 overs with Addy Mehta taking the plaudits for his bowling this time, as he claimed 5 for 61. In reply, there were good efforts by Mark Ilott 47, Matt Evans 46 and Dave Pett 45 but as wickets tumbled so did the hopes of winning the game and the last wicket fell in the last over some 20 runs short.

The 3s returned back to winnings ways against Hertford thanks to a good all-round performance. Bar scored 205 for 6 off 48 overs, declaring early to try and force home the result. Cherry Bob Daley rolled back the years with a 'hard hitting and ferocious' 71 and Michael John smacked a rapid 41 not out to allow stand in skipper Rupert Pyrah the chance to declare 5 overs early. This brave decision duly worked as they bowled out Hertford with time to spare for 105, with Michael John taking 3 for 28 and Luke Owers who was rather fortunate to take 2 for 14 as he would no doubt admit his bowling on Saturday was not the best he has ever delivered.

The 4s won again which is no surprise to me. There seems to be three certainties in life, you are born, you die and the 4s win. They routed the hosts, St Margaretsbury for just 66 with Spencer Randon taking 6 for 24. A word has to go out to young Alex Whitehouse whose 2 for 4 cleaned up the tail.

With the rain clouds 'a circling' Breezey sent out Steve Moore to put an end to the game as he smashed a quick and easy on the eye 34 and the game was over in plenty of time for the 'Bang Bus' to arrive at Hoddy by 5pm to watch the 1s put the hosts under a bit of pressure before they drove off into the sunset to enjoy their 10<sup>th</sup> win in 11 matches.

## **Sunday**

### **FABULOUS BAKER BOY SENDS BAR THROUGH TO FINAL**

**West Herts 70 all out in 30.2 overs**

**Potters Bar 73 for 3 in 18.2 overs**

There are very few times when yours truly is purely stumped for words. Sunday was one of them.

In arguably Bar's biggest game for years, at least three to my mind, against team who are a league above, a team who last year we took one league wicket for 387 runs in 73 overs, we simply annihilated them and waltzed through to the Becker Cup Final for the first time, which is to be held on Sunday September 10<sup>th</sup> at Shenley.

Lenny won the toss and asked West Herts to bat first on a pitch that would offer some early movement in heavy overcast conditions. With our attack hardly conducive to seam bowling in the main, we bowled beautifully with a new opening attack of Kash Weeraratne and Gavin Baker, who in truth bowled some pure filth the day before.

With the prolific talents of West Herts overseas player Neal Parlane opening up, the boys needed to be bang on the button from ball one and in truth we couldn't have asked for a better start. Kash beat him all ends up first up with a pearler and then after 4 balls, the next one pitched on or around middle stump and hit the top of off stump – Parlane beaten, 0 for 1, the top man gone and for a moment it felt like time was in slow motion. Cue delight akin to winning the World Cup and Bar had got off to a dream start.

In came Herts player and West Herts skipper Matt Smith and he was soon groping at balls outside the off stump and after the loss of Parlane, they were clearly rocked. Cue Gavin Baker who was hitting the seam almost every ball and he accounted for Smith as he tried to clear mid off and he dollied up a catch to Lenny Cooper who gleefully held a relatively easy catch. 1 for 2 and things were to get better and better for the Bar as Simon Farrell was caught at first slip by Dean Dass for 3, Mike Hodges was brilliantly caught down the leg side by Scottie Fraser for 0 and then Kai Farrell followed giving a regulation catch to Scott off Kashie for 0 and when Craig Sanders (whose brilliantly nicknamed Colonel) gave Mike Palmer catching practice at third slip, West Herts were 16 for 6.

There was then some decent batting by Waqas Chaudry and Jimmy Phang and they got in behind it and poked and prodded around and they started to give the score a slightly more respectable look to it as they put on 41 in 82 balls but then a three wicket burst from Lenny Cooper ripped the heart out of the tail and when Paul Barker had number eleven Mark Anakin plumb in front, Potters Bar had done the unbelievable by bowling out West Herts (current champions of the HCPL Division 2 East) for just 70. This team are no mugs. Although they sit bottom of the league, they have beaten High Wycombe in the league this season and that is a great victory in the world of club cricket.

The bowling was of the highest standard. Kashie took the new ball and bowled his 10 overs straight through and took 2 for 15, including the prized scalp of Neal Parlane. Lenny Cooper took 3 for 34 from 9 overs and the more overs he bowls in a spell the better he gets. For me Len hasn't bowled enough this year but today showed just how good he is. Paul Barker yet again

bowled well and his 1 for 10 from just shy of 6 overs was another economical return but for me the hero was 17 year old Gavin Baker.

Gavin has a lovely, smooth action, bowls wicket to wicket and his return of 6 overs, 2 maidens, four for eight was the backbone of Bars excellent bowling performance. The fielding yet again was of first class standard and we made an excellent side look dreadfully average.

However, we now had to knuckle down and make 71 for victory and when Gavin Baker was adjudged leg before for 4; it gave a perfect start for the home side. This now brought to the wicket the in-form Dean Dass and he started as positively as normal and anything pitched in his half was on its way towards the fence. At the other end we had Mike Palmer who for me this target was just up his 'alley' so to speak. He could play and bat at will and slowly see us home whilst at the other end we had the animals coming in two by two.

Dean Dass perished for 14, given out leg before and at 25 for 2 the hosts were still clinging onto the slimmest of hopes. Up stepped Scott Fraser and for whatever reason the decision that ultimately won us the match. After 11 tight overs and at 33 for 2, Captain Matt Smith came on to bowl some gentle off-breaks and this gave Scott the chance to take advantage and he did so in some fine style. Three half volleys, three fours and when tea arrived Bar were 48 for 2 needing just 23 more to win.

As the final ball was struck for 3 runs by Mike Palmer, I expected the first ball after tea to be taken by Mike, however, rather bizarrely Scott Fraser ended up facing the first ball after tea and for me that is the first time I've ever seen this happen in any form of cricket. A simple mix-up could well have been the outcome.

After two maidens after tea, Fraser went caught behind for 16 and this brought in Kash who dispatched three fours and a six in eleven balls to win the game in handsome style. Kash ended 21 not out, Mike Palmer 16 not out off of 53 balls. The semi final had been won by 7 wickets with 31.4 overs to spare and without a doubt the best and biggest win of our history.

To win the semi final is arguably better than the final itself. It means you have done all the hard work and got there. We have never felt what its like to get there and September 10<sup>th</sup> will be one hell of an occasion. In the final we meet Hemel Hempstead who accounted for Radlett in relatively comfortable fashion by 60-odd runs. We have had 2 decent games with Hemel this year and its nice that both sides 'get on' and hopefully the weather will match the occasion and make it a memorable day for both clubs – but lets have it right, it would top our season if we can go there and turn it on again especially as we have had a pig of a draw throughout the competition.

Next week sees another big weekend as on Sunday its Presidents Day and for me Sunday is a highlight of the season. The 1s will be looking for a first win for years and I think it's the last year of Dave Lol's tenure (although I'm not too sure) and there will be some good players on show. It's a great day, a privilege almost and having played and officiated in it, it's a great showpiece after a season of hard toil.

As for the league games, the ones entertain Knebworth who travel to us rock bottom of the league and they will be desperate to avenge the defeat inflicted on them by us in late June. The 2s travel to Broxbourne where a win for Petty's men will secure their futures for next season in Division 2, where for me they have found their level and the their feet.

The 3s are now safe and travel to Letchworth and the 4s can secure promotion as they play bottom club Hexton at the school where their amazing run of form deserves promotion and the chance to ply their trade in Division 10.

After slugging them off earlier on in the season (as it turned out rather harshly) I feel I must give a mention to the Fillies, who I understand have a tournament on Bank Holiday Monday. I hope the sun shines and they enjoy the games and I sincerely hope they have a great day. Subject to how the 'Stanford' 20/Twenty goes tonight, if the boys win they have a trip to Sunbury at the regional finals where they face Finchley in the Semi Finals – The winners of the day play at The Rose Bowl and the home of Hampshire Cricket. Until the result of tonight's game is known, for me that's pie in the sky at the minute.

All I can say is best of luck to all 44 players on show this weekend and let's have a right old go and hope lady luck is smiling on PBCC

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

Regards  
Fred