

KASH BLOWS AWAY SAWBO TAIL

Saturday

Potters Bar 263 for 8 dec in 54 overs

Sawbridgeworth 153 all out in 41.5 overs

Potters Bar secured their fifth win in five completed away league matches in a tight, tense and fractious affair at Sawbridgeworth securing a 110 run victory with just 10 minutes left for play.

Bar skipper Lenny Cooper won a vital toss and had no hesitation in batting first on a surface that would crack and crumble as the game went on and would take spin as soon as the new ball had lost its effect. He opened up with Gavin Baker and Mike Palmer and despite Mike Palmer offering a relatively simple chance top third slip on 7 the boys started in confident mood and saw the new ball off with any further scares.

It took a change of bowling to disrupt Bar's good start. The off spin of Foster, complete with cap on, forced Gavin Baker into padding up and offering no shot for 19 and when Mike Palmer played a hideous shot and was cleaned bowled to a rank long hop Bar were 53 for 2. Thankfully though the Sawbo bowling was pretty ordinary and this meant that there was a 4-ball being served up every over and with Lenny Cooper and Scott Fraser at the crease, the score was always going to be a fast moving one.

Bar reached the three figures in the 23rd over and Scott Fraser was looking as positive and in form as his last trip to Town Fields when he blasted an imperious 108 in the Becker Cup and Lenny Cooper was playing beautifully as he was scoring at better than a run a ball. Alas the half an hour period just before lunch was to provide drama in large lumps.

With the score on 114, Lenny Cooper was adjudged leg before for 35 to Bovaird's first delivery of the game and this brought Kash Weeraratne to the wicket. Kash, the leagues leading run scorer by at least 100 runs came into the game in top form. He scored a 111 in a Presidents game at Ealing the day before and with the field spread far and wide hopes were high with Bar looking to pose a massive and match winning total.

Kash started well, striking Cunningham for 10 in his first over after he switched ends and on 15 the drama started. Cunningham bowled a ball which Kash prodded back to the bowler and Cunningham raced to pick the ball up and hurled it towards Kash. No run was being attempted, Kash did not appear to be out of his ground by more than a pace, yet a throw directed straight at him caused a leap out of the air and the ball crashed into the stumps causing raucous celebrations. Despite Kash clearly taking evasive action he was given out run out and this caused a great deal of emotions to spill out from both sides. The matter to remember here is that a pace out of his ground the eyes of the law say your out and that was the way it was seen.

Bar managed to negotiate their way through to lunch with the score at 4 for 151 off of 32 overs and it needed some good batting to ensure a defensible total was reached. Scott Fraser completed his 2nd league '50' off of 59 balls and played in my eyes a better innings than that in the Becker as this was an innings when the wicket was at times, for the spinners anyway creating major problems with both turn and bounce. Scottie finally went for 62 off of 65 balls in an innings that contained 10 fours and 2 sixes. However after losing Scott Bar continued to lose wickets at a regular rate but again, the Sawbo bowling had little life to it and for the first time in a

long while they looked average, offering easy runs and committing the cardinal sin of bowling both sides of the wicket, making field setting nigh on impossible.

Despite losing Jared Norman for 5, Nesan Jeyaratnam for 12 and Paul Barker for 5, it was Dean Dass who struck a lovely 58* off of 62 balls in an innings that showed many that Dean still has a big part to play in the side. He has shown this season that he is striking the ball as well as anyone and looks in great touch and offers yet another much needed dimension to our play. Deano struck 7 fours and 3 sixes in an innings that simply took the brief sniff Sawbo had away and meant Bar could attack and have fielders round the bat throughout the reply.

Dean Dass shared an unbeaten 44 run partnership with Andy Colquhoun in just 46 balls and this took Bars total to 263 for 8 before skipper Lenny Cooper called the boys in with 6 overs still remaining of their allocation. The problem was that rain was starting to fall. Taking into account the 10-minute changeover, a total of 40 minutes were lost making Sawbo face a minimum of 43 overs, it should have been 44 but that's by the by to either go for it or simply survive on a raging turner of a pitch.

Bar opened up with spin at both ends and it wasn't long before they had a good foothold in the game. After some juicy oranges were served up, the vital wicket of Danny Hull was captured as he weakly held out to mid on off of the bowling of Paul McGee. With the majority of the fielders in attacking positions, runs were always going to go at a good rate and the Sawbo '50' was reached in just 62 balls but then the boys learnt the pace to bowl to extract the turn and bounce and it wasn't long before the wickets started to tumble.

Phil Marshall went for 21 bowled by Paul Barker as he played down the Piccadilly line when the ball was on the Bakerloo, Rob Marshall went for 21 leg before again to Paul Barker and Joe Rudkin who I must admit I cannot understand for the life of me why he bats so high, offered some gentle catching practice to short extra cover as he departed for 0. Sawbo had gone from 56 for 1 to 64 for 4 at tea in an action packed 47 minutes where Bar had already bowled 16 overs.

Just 27 overs remained and Bar needed to keep at it but Sawbo's captain and ex-Essex pro Danny Wilson was at the wicket and was in no mood to sit back and play like a rabbit trapped in the headlights. He pounced on anything short and pulled his way back into form and he was now going to be the big obstacle between winning and being involved in a lacklustre draw.

Still though Bar probed away and got Burrell out caught off a leading edge giving a simple catch to mid on which Kash took with some glee. The wickets of Tony Marshall caught at cover and a first PBCC catch for Andy Colquhoun brought a quite rightly fired up Kash Weeraratne onto bowl.

Kash cleaned up Foster for 7 and the score now stood at 114 for 7 but more importantly there was just a maximum of 53 minutes left for play. Still the big wicket of Wilson was elusive and the Sawbo skipper completed a fine '50' in 54 balls with 9 fours and a six. Kashie was now finding his line on a pretty dead pitch for the quicks and got the prized wicket of Wilson, leg before for 54. It was now a race against time of whether Bar could winkle out the last two wickets and with some extensive and needless gardening of the pitch by Cunningham minutes were starting to disappear quicker and quicker.

Kash summoned up a peach of a ball that brought a regulation catch to second slip that was spilled but this was soon forgotten as Kashie produced a real pearl of a bouncer that rose and got big on Cunningham who could just fend it off his nose and onwards and upwards and Scott

Fraser held a dolly catch. This brought in last man James Bovaird who was clean bowled first ball and Bar had secured their 5th successive league win away from home and a 25-point haul with just 10 minutes to spare. Kash finished with 4 for 27 off of just 5.5 hostile overs and Paul Barker 3 for 42 from 15.

So Bar had kept the pressure on the leaders with a much needed win and it was desperate that the boys won as both Radlett and Welwyn Garden both won in rain reduced matches where again they had the luck of winning a vital toss. Let's make no bones, this was arguably our best win of the season as we scored at a great rate and bowled out a decent side in less than 42 overs.

A few will point the finger in this match to the umpiring and a couple of decisions that were talking points. What players, officials and spectators must realise that these fellas are human, they make mistakes just as much as batsmen who give their wickets away in bizarre fashion, bowlers bowl poorly and fielders who drop catches when it appears easier to catch than drop. We must all remember a good umpire does not become a bad one after one bad day at the office.

The 2s were cut down to size by Dunstable in a 1-sided game at The Walk in what appeared to have a 20/20 look about it. Despite being 38-1 Bar collapsed in bizarre fashion to 87 all out in just 32.1 overs against some quality opposition. Hats off to the boys as they had Dunstable 19 for 3, 40 for 4 but the middle order of Dunstable saw it through winning by 5 wickets. 5 points is a disappointing return by lets make no bones – the top two in this league, namely Dunstable and Bishops Stortford are poles apart of anything else in this league and will no doubt finish in this position at the end of the season. The positive must come from the fact that the boys in the field gave their all and to get them 5 down should be praised as a fine effort.

The 3s were disappointed to only claim a draw against Abbots Langley 2s down the school. Skipper Dave Rock was 'disappointed' with the boys' performance and obviously thought the boys were better than this showing. They were deprived of the services of Neil Raisborough who pulled a fetlock had effectively the boys were reduced to 10-men for nigh on the entirety of the game. For the record Abbots racked up 197 for 8 and the Bar finished on 177-8, 20 short and they are no starting to lose touch with the leaders but again let's have it right, they are still having a bloody good season and even though promotion is starting to slip away the boys have performed admirably after promotion last season.

The 4s won in conditions that made Noah envious at Offley. The league leaders made 163 all out thanks to 5 for 39 from Dean Barker. These were tapped off with 4 overs left, 8 wickets down thanks to Dan Brown's 52 and Johnny Lewis 49 and now Breezey's men are now 5 points from the summit.

The 5s still cling on to the feint chance of promotion with their 5th straight win after they saw off the challenge from North Enfield 3s. The visitors were bowled out for 150 with Mr J again in the wickets (4 for 49) and Sam Titmus 3 for 20. It was the youngster Titmus whose 40* and Jamie Trust 37 brought home the bacon with around 20 overs remaining.

Sunday saw a cracking win over Eastcote in the Chess Valley League as the boys chased 214 and got them for 9 with a ball left. Paul Barker finally got some runs under his belt as he crashed 57 and Greg Hodge and Nesan Jeyaratnam both got 20's to see the boys home. This all after the mother of all nights out the previous night in St Albans – by the look of some of the photos sent to me by a secret voyeur, a worrying trait I'm sure you will all agree, I'm surprised the boys could stand let alone play a decent standard of cricket – put it this way in a few years their powers of recovery wont allow them to do it. Take it from one who knows.

Next week sees arguably the clubs biggest week for many years. On Saturday we entertain Radlett who are placed in 2nd place in the league, 6 points clear of us. They are a fine side but if we play to our optimum we are more than a match for them. At the moment we look in good form with the ball and on Saturday we bowled and fielded as well as we have done for sometime so it's all set up for a real humdinger.

Sunday sees the Quarter Final of the Becker Cup and we are at home to Stevenage (1pm start) who themselves are in good form. We have a great chance of progressing but to do this we have to play positive cricket and again we have to play at our best to progress. It's as Alex Ferguson would say 'squeaky bum time' and the boys have to prove not only to us but themselves if they have not just the talent but the gonads to perform when under pressure and in front of a large crowd. I have total faith in them and I just want everyone who steps out on both days to have no regrets – try their best and hopefully this should be sufficient. If it doesn't work out as long as the boys give their all that's all anyone can ask, but I hope they are all aware that everyone will be willing them on – I know I will be.

The 2s have the delight of a trip to league leaders and recent conquerors of Welwyn Garden City in the 'Boris' Bishops Stortford who will be the hardest test without a shadow of a doubt. Lets again remember though, Petty's men are not going to roll over and have their bellies tickled (mainly because Arsenal aren't on Sky – that's a joke before anyone asks!) and the team will arguably be at their strongest and the boys have all the capabilities of putting in a good performance. All the batters are talented, have good techniques and on a road of a pitch they should go there confident of performing. As for the bowlers, they can get a fair few feathers in their caps if they bowl in the right areas and I for one would not write the boys off.

The 3s travel to Kings Langley 2s where they will be desperate to make up for last weeks disappointing drawn match against the hosts local rivals. Again selection is strong and those missing out higher will be confident of imposing themselves on a game the boys really ought to be winning comfortably.

The 4s entertain Southgate Compton 2s where they again will hope to continue their amazing run of results, despite being without inspirational skipper Ian Breeze. No doubt though Paul 'Cheeko' Kennedy will step into the breach with no worries and this will give the boys every chance. The 5s travel to Bentley Heath where they will be looking to keep in the hunt for promotion although after several beers on Saturday I still couldn't see how they could go up but no doubt as ever, I will be proved wrong. This is a needle match to match any in the league after some less than 'sporting' behaviour what seems like an eternity ago, but I know for sure the boys will be fired up, fully expecting to come away with the full compliment of points.

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

Regards
Fred