

## **BAR BACK ON FORM AS THEY ENJOY A TRIP TO THE PARK**

### **Saturday**

**Potters Bar 269 for 9 in 60 overs**

**Knebworth Park 136 all out in 45.4 overs**

So after I come back from holiday after an up and down time the Bar are back top of the league with a convincing victory over a lacklustre Knebworth Park, which means the boys still have a 100% record away from The Walk.

On a warm morning and a team far from full strength, Lenny lost the toss and was inserted on a wicket that was extremely green and would offer a lot of assistance to the new ball bowlers early on and this was certainly going to be the case as from ball one it moved and jagged away with great regularity.

The opening partnership of Mike Palmer and Ollie Coughlan was soon disturbed as Ollie had been adjudged caught behind for just 5 and Mike Palmer soon joined him for 17 and at 36 for 2 Bar were looking a million miles away from a testing score.

This brought in Jared Norman who was starting to look back to his imperious best and Scott Fraser who was going for his Olympic Rings (his 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive 0) and his heart would have been in his mouth as he offered a regulation catch to mid-on only for the fielder to make a right old 'horlicks' of it and next ball Scottie clipped his first runs since his 68 on the opening day of the season.

Both Jared and Scott started to tuck into the tiring Knebworth attack, with Jared driving and firmly clipping the balls off his legs with impunity and Scott launching the ball over mid-on and square driving handsomely, the scoring rate was well over 4.5 runs an over and if Bar batted sensibly then a big total was well within their sights. Alas Scot perished for an attractive 35 off of just 41 balls and this brought Kash Weeraratne to the wicket and he and Jared saw it through to the lunch break with Bar well poised for a large total to defend with the score sat at 137 for 3 with 27 overs left of their allocation.

The plan after lunch was for Kash to have a real go and Jared who'd completed his first '50' of the season to drop anchor and set himself to be there at the end. Alas thanks to some distinctly average bowling Jared had other ideas as the first over after lunch was dispatched for 20. At the other end Kash was slowly accumulating but although he crept into the thirties he was not middling the ball with the regularity of his previous innings but this is a sign of the bloke's class.

Jared went for 86 when the score was on 198 when he guided the ball into slips hands. It was a top knock on a surface which was still giving help to the bowlers and his 125 ball stay, which contained 14 fours and a six helped Bar gain a strong foothold in the game. This though sparked a mini collapse as skipper Lenny Cooper was adjudged caught and bowled for 4 and Kash Weeraratne went bowled for 40 and all of a sudden from being 198 for 3 off of 42 overs, we were now 210 for 6 with a lot of overs still remaining to bat out.

Despite losing Paul Barker for 16 and Dave Pett for just 5 it was thanks in the main to a 9<sup>th</sup> wicket partnership of 27 between Tom Coughlan 24\* and Greg Hodge 5 to see Bar end up 269 for 9 off of their 60 over allocation. Thanks to a slower than normal over rate, Bar had just 2 hours 40 to bowl their 50 overs back, meaning that there would be no additional time for any extra overs to be completed if the need arose.

Bar set off with spinners Paul McGee and Paul Barker in the attack and it wasn't long before there was a double breakthrough. Paul McGee got a ball to bounce and turn on Adrian Holmes and he was smartly caught at 2<sup>nd</sup> slip by Jared Norman and Ben Lewis ridiculously ran out Dave Lowe after some excellent work in the covers by Kash Weeraratne. Knebworth were 3 for 2 and were being strangled by the accurate spin and guile and the sheer hunger and will to win of the Bar fielders.

Herts wicket keeper Tom Jenkins weakly held out to midwicket after starting well, where Dave Pett held a relatively easy catch and when Knebworth's overseas player Anthony Pratt was again run out by Ben Lewis after yet more excellent fielding by Kash Weeraratne and at tea off of 21 overs Knebworth were out of the game and holding on at 4 for 51 with their only hope was getting out of jail with a poor end of a draw.

The hapless Lewis who run out arguably Knebworth's two main dangers was desperate to atone for his two horrendous yes, no, wait oh dear, sorry, well its your fault anyway and he set about doing his utmost to save the game for the hosts as skipper took the new ball to try and blast out the middle order but with time and overs ticking away Lenny threw the ball to Paul McGee and he swiftly removed Murphy for 18 and then the important wicket of Ben Lewis for a 114 ball stay for 48 and with the score on 103 for 6 the result was nearly there.

The ball was then handed to 2<sup>nd</sup> eleven vice captain Greg Hodge who had captured the wicket of Knebworth skipper Ryan Skeggs which was mainly due to a brilliant piece of keeping by Scott Fraser who took an excellent leg-side stumping. I must state that in the 7 league games this season, Scott has yet to concede a bye. This in itself is an amazing achievement and one that surprised many. Scott has been a godsend and has made a decent fielding side look like a bloody good one with his neat and tidy keeping and positive encouragement behind the timbers. Paul Slade surrendered meekly first ball and Hodgey clean bowled old campaigner Graham Fisher.

Kash Weeraratne came on and struggled to find the edge and his line and bowled a nasty but totally accidental beamer at number 11 Chris Brook who was then clearly disturbed as his footwork was nowhere next ball and Kash removed his off bail and Bar had won by an impressive 136 runs and thus gain a vital 25 points.

To win a game in this fashion against a good team, make them look a distinctly average team and bowling a side where the skipper comes in at 7 when he normally batted at 5 is a good effort and Paul McGee's 5 for 50 was for me the first time in ages that Paul had the control, got the pace right and got the ball to bounce and get big on batsmen – long may it continue. As for the other bowlers credit must be given to Greg Hodge whose 2 for 17 off of 4 overs confirmed the win but for Kash, Paul Barker and Lenny it wasn't their day but it wont be long before all of the bowlers click and we will have a decent attack.

The 2s suffered defeat against Knebworth's second string in a tight finish where it took a interesting leg before decision with just 3 deliveries left of a tight and tense encounter to entertain a large crowd. That was apart from one gentleman who appeared to look as if he'd died as he was slumped on the grass by the car park, fast asleep with just a pair of jeans on. Whether the excitement had got to him its anybodies guess but Ill have a crack at an afternoon of strong lager! A decimated team kept Knebworth to 253 for 7 off of 53 overs and thanks to 53 for John Pett and 33 from Tom Pett meant Bar went into the last over at 162 for 9. A single off of the first ball meant Michael John had 5 balls to see off. 3 balls from the end it appeared that Michael had been hit high up on this thigh and the Umpires digit was raised and the game was lost. However, given that a combined 7 players were absent I would have thought Dave Pett would be delighted to escape the game with 9 points.

The 3s won yet again to continue their great run of form this season. Thanks to career best figures by Rupert Pyrah of 9 for 66 meant the boys had to chase a target of 183 for victory, which in all fairness is still a decent total to get. Thanks to 80\* from 'Cherry Bob' Daley and a hard hitting 51 from Ajith Walallawita meant the Bar stayed in the top three with a 7 wicket victory.

As good as Rupert's 9 for was and don't get me wrong it's an amazing achievement and one that may never be bettered it wasn't a patch on what Dean Barker achieved in the 4s against Kings Langley 3s. Deano, who could only play until 6pm (that's village in itself) nipped out the first 9 and despite close calls was unable to claim the maximum. Did this bother Dean? Not on your Nellie. After finishing with 9 for 71, Dean strapped the pads on and stroked a majestic 91\* to win the game almost single handed by 8 wickets.

The 5s were beaten for the first time in three outings by a strong Luton Town and Indians as they were skittled out for 73 chasing an unlikely 214 for victory.

Next week sees a massive week for the first team. Saturday sees the boys travel to Stevenage. Winning the toss and batting is essential over there as it spins from ball one. With Paul McGee, Paul Barker and hopefully Nesan Jeyaratnam back fit and well we are for once in a strong position to match the hosts on a ground where we never seem to do well. Sunday sees the second round of the Becker Cup where we travel to Sawbridgeworth. Sawbo are currently in a bit of a trough but they still have players who can win a game at any given time and although we will start as favourites, it must not be forgotten that they thrashed us twice in two days last year and we cannot become complacent as the winners will tackle either North Mymms or Harpenden at home.

The 2s entertain Chorleywood who sit rock bottom of the league and Petty's men who will be buoyed by the return of anything up to 7 players and they should be confident of getting a maximum point haul.

The 3s travel to Parkfield, the 4s entertain Frogmore and the 5s have a rest from the league as Hoddesdon have pulled out of the league. Whether they can get a friendly or not considering England will be in action on Saturday is debatable.

If you can get to Sawbo on Sunday the support is always appreciated and it should be a really good afternoon of cricket and with a bit of luck this time next week we could be in the third round of Hertfordshire's cricketing version of the FA Cup, with a home tie beckoning

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

Regards  
Fred