

BARS PROMOTION HOPES WELL AND TRULY BURGER-ED UP!

Saturday

Potters Bar 66 all out in 28 overs

Radlett 67 for 6 wkts in 21.4 overs

Potters Bar now have just a faint glimmer of promotion after a poor performance against the league leaders Radlett, in a game that if we are being honest they simply couldn't afford to lose.

On a wicket that wouldn't produce a drawn game, Bar won the toss and elected to bat on a lovely day for cricket – alas the conditions didn't match the standard of batting as Bar in truth toiled against good, accurate bowling and fielding that Jonty Rhodes would be impressed to call his own and unfortunately came a distant second.

After winning the toss, Gavin Baker and Mike Palmer went out to open and after a tense first over where Gavin Baker continually groped outside his off stump, Bar finally got the first runs on the board when Mike pounced on a short pitched ball from Stuart Browne and Bar were away but we were not to get off to a great start as Gavin Baker tried to pull away from a rising ball only to deflect it and Radlett keeper Steve Lowe acrobatically leapt like a salmon and clutched the ball one handed. 6 for 1 and not the best of starts.

Skipper Len Cooper came in at three and attempted to assert some pressure back on the bowlers by twice taking the aerial route but he soon came a cropper by offering no shot to a ball that moved in a touch and kept low and Bar were in trouble at 22 for 2 however worse was to follow when Scott Fraser perished third ball to a good one handed diving catch at third slip and Mike was adjudged lbw. Radlett and in particular Shane Burger was having a field day as he had figures at this stage of 4 for 10 from 6 overs.

Kash Weeraratne who is still the leagues leading run scorer tried to stamp his authority on the proceedings as he smashed Browne for a 4 and a 6 off consecutive balls but he soon went, playing a loose on-drive which Browne gleefully held off of the bowling of Burger to complete a 5-wicket haul, all within the space of 35 balls. When Jared Norman (1) and Dean Dass (4) who'd got a pearly of a delivery, Bar were amazingly 40 for 7 after just 18 crazy overs of cricket.

Nesan Jeyaratnam and Paul Barker briefly halted the slide as the two left-handers put on 24 but Nesan went caught and bowled after hitting the ball onto his toe and it looped up to the slow left-armer Haydn Smith. Andy Colquhoun prodded tamely to silly point for 0 second ball and Paul McGee can count himself a little unlucky to be given out at forward short leg for another 0. At the other end Paul Barker was stranded on 17 not out and Bar had capitulated for just a sad and sorry 66. The boys had been bowled out in just 101 minutes and had the embarrassment of having to go out and bowl two overs before the luncheon interval.

Shane Burger had bowled 14 great overs and came away with 6 for 28 and slow left arm Haydn Smith had taken 3 for 1 and yes, early on with the new ball the pitch was going to be hard work but quite frankly at times there wasn't a vast amount of application on view and that's got to have disappointed the boys as they had worked so hard to keep up with the likes of Welwyn and Radlett only for it to slip away in 100 minutes of batting.

What the boys had to do was give it a right good go in the field and in fairness, none of the 11 on show could have tried any harder than they did. Andy Colquhoun and Kash Weeraratne opened

up and it wasn't long after lunch, 6 balls in fact before Kash Weeratane had Graham Dill fending at a wide one and Scott Fraser took the regulation catch. 3 for 1 and you never know.

Hopes were raised further when Andy Colquhoun who bowled beautifully all afternoon had Nick Fielden caught behind for 6 and at 8 for 2 the boys were rightly pumped up. Alas the match winning partnership ensued between Haydn Smith and Rob Smith with the latter playing some lovely cover drives but with the field up it was always going to be 4 or nothing.

With Andy Colquhoun switched to the Tesco End he soon got Rob Smith to chop onto his stumps and when Steve Lowe was brilliantly taken by keeper Fraser again, there was a slight glimmer with the score at 39 for 4 and for a small time 28 more runs looked a long way away. In all fairness though Haydn Smith played sensibly but still Radlett made hard work of it.

The brilliantly named Mitzi Choksi was caught behind for 2 and when Simon Gray went caught again behind the wicket, 5 catches for Scott Fraser again off Andy Colquhoun, Radlett were 55 for 6 still needing 12. Alas it just needs a couple of loose deliveries and they duly arrived as the boys were still striving for that wicket taking delivery and Radlett were home 6 wickets down and 25 points in the bag leaving them 38 points ahead of the Bar with just 6 matches left.

Fair play to Radlett, their bowling and fielding was first class but I would not have liked to have been in their dressing room if they needed another 30-odd runs. How 16 wickets went in under 50 overs remains a mystery as the wicket I am positive was nowhere near as bad as the scores say, but you needed to bat well and dig in. Apart from Haydn Smith who finished 29* I couldn't think of a batter who did that. For Bar, Andy Colquhoun was excellent and he finished with 5 for 26 from 10 good overs.

So Bar finished with 6 points and now lie 4th in the HCPL Division 2 East table. The top 4 are pretty much adrift of anything below so it's a four way shake-up for the last 6 matches. All the boys can do now is go out and compete in those last six matches and you never know. The last time the boys were promoted our friends from Welwyn collapsed like a pack of cards and missed out. I have a feeling its harder this time but you never know stranger things have happened – Davey Pett for instance stayed up at the cricket club till 1am a few weeks ago so we have to keep believing.

Talking of Petty his team took on the Bishops Stortford 'All-Stars' and myself and a few others thought we had half a chance of pulling off a surprise or two – alas it wasn't to be. Despite winning the toss on a belter of a pitch, Bar could only make 168 all out. Addy Mehta with 64 and Mark Taylor with 22 were the only major run makers although from my hazy memory, 5 others got into double figures. 168 was never going to be enough and it was a matter of time before Stortford reached the total, losing just 1 wicket in doing so and taking next to no time in getting there.

The 3s had a fine win at Kings Langley where they batted first and made 220-9 off of 53 overs. Matt Evans 89 and Rob Daley 40 were the main contributors, although there was Dave Rock 22 and a couple of 15's went to make a defendable total. Thanks to Rupert Pyrah's 7 for 70 (I wouldn't mind a pint for every wicket he's taken in the last 5 years) the boys bowled out the hosts for 143 with 7 and a bit overs remaining.

The 4s continued their amazing run of form with stand-in skipper Paul Kennedy at the helm. With Ian Breeze away sunning his already brown physique (PE Masters – and they say they have a hard life, although I wouldn't want their suntan cream bill) Cheeko asked Southgate Compton

2s to bat and they made 183 for 8 in the 53 overs. The boys took just over 30-odd overs in chasing it down with the run machine that is John Lewis 75, “never knowingly short of runs,” Andy Hughes 46 and Dean Barker 35 saw the boys maintain their top three slot and with games running out, promotion should be just a matter of time.

The 5s had a quite unbelievable game and when I heard of what happened I was aghast for many reasons. Firstly, the Bar boys made 122 all out in under 30 overs which is somewhat disappointing in itself. However the team spirit the boys have, meant that even at 94 for 3 they never gave up and amazingly Bentley Heath were all out for 122, hence a tied match. This rarely happens and from memory there was 1 bona-fide tie last year and this is the first this year – the 3s had a scores level game two weeks ago but this is of course a different kettle of fish.

By all accounts this game had nigh on everything, including a timed out which I have never witnessed in some 27 years of watching, playing and officiating in club cricket. For those who will undoubtedly moan,

“You can’t have a man timed out”

Why on earth not? It’s a dismissal recognised in Tom Smiths Umpire and Scoring Manual and is a valid dismissal. What I am amazed at is that the boys knew what to do and that it wasn’t credited to the bowler as that would have foxed a lot of scorers and umpires alike in the HCPL Division 2 East, let alone Division 13 – not by me I hasten to say ☺

Sunday

BAR CRUISE INTO BECKER LAST FOUR

Stevenage 85 all out in 37.5 overs

Potters Bar 89 for 0 in 21.4 overs

Stevenage were taken to the cleaners on Sunday by a professional display by Potters Bar in the Becker Cup and now travel to HCPL Premier League side West Herts in the Semi Final on the 20th August.

Yet again Len Cooper won the toss on a wicket that had a green tinge to it and this time opted for a spell in the field and attempt to chase down in similar fashion as the previous two rounds against Sawbridgeworth and North Mymms. After a quiet start it wasn’t long before wickets started to tumble, all too much akin to the previous day’s larks!

With the score on 15, Gary Brown went caught at mid-off trying to hit Andy Colquhoun over the top and all he could do was dolly it up. It was the first of another 3 wickets for Vikram (Andy Colquhoun) as he accounted for the scalps of Iddross (0) and the big wicket of Saeed Ali Kazmi (21), who both went caught trying to clear Gavin Baker at mid on and obviously couldn’t. With the score at 30 for 3, the Bar had a good start but still had a couple of important wickets left to take. Notably that of overseas star Gareth Berg who almost single handedly won them their last round match at Hoddesdon with a match winning 130-odd.

On came Nesan Jeyaratnam and he immediately had Ashley Bayes trapped on the crease with his and Bayes’s first ball and then the prized scalp as he tempted Berg in trying to slap him over

midwicket and he held out to a good catch by Paul Barker and all of a sudden Stevenage were 34 for 5 and the game taken from under them.

Wickets continued to slowly fall as Stevenage understandably tried to stick it out and the only partnership of any note was that of Dave Carr (29), who I cannot for the life of me understand why he batted at 8 when he opens in the League side and skipper Albert Sohdi who gritted it out for a painstaking 13 off 68 balls.

Stevenage were finally dismissed in the 38th over for just 85 and the Bar boys had bowled and fielded beautifully again, conceding no extras, which in one-day cricket is a large part of the game. Of the bowlers, Andy Colquhoun took 3 for 10, making his weekend analysis 8 for 36 from 15 overs, Nesan Jeyaratnam 3 for 19 from 8 overs, Len Cooper 2 for 11 and there was a wicket for both Paul McGee 1 for 18 from his 10 overs (defying his age and proving he still is a major player as I understand was questioned on a late night train journey back from London mmmm!) and Paul Barker who finished with 1 for 6 from nigh on 7 overs.

So Bar required 86 from 50 overs, 20 too many remarked one wag from the previous days exploits but in this cup we really looked focused and seem to apply ourselves so much more than we did the day before. That's what it appeared anyway, rightly or wrongly.

Teenage sensation Gavin Baker opened up with veteran Mike Palmer defying his critics as well as his age and they slowly saw off the new ball, punished the short deliveries and in one shot in particular Mike Palmer played one of the finest cover drives seen all season. (Thanks mate a Peroni is on the Bar-Editor) As Mike settled in for a nice little red-inker, Gavin took centre stage and clipped and drove the ball beautifully and brought up his second consecutive Becker 50 with a scorching on drive. His milestone came up in 63 balls, 68 minutes and he struck 10 fours.

The game was finished as Mike tickled a leg stump half volley past the man at short fine leg and the boys were through to the Semi Final for the first time in 3 years. Unlike a lot of sides in the last four, we have had a pig of a draw, namely Sawbridgeworth, North Mymms, and Stevenage and now we have to top this lot off with a trip to West Herts, who lets be honest gave us the mother of all hidings last year not once but twice. However we are a better side now and they are riddled with injuries so you never know (oh yes I forgot they beat High Wycombe at the weekend). As for the other three left in, all I will say is all of them at one stage have had to play sides from lower down the pyramid - Hemel for instance haven't played a team from their own division yet!

Next week sees the 1s travel to our old muckers Welwyn Garden City in a 2nd place v 4th place encounter. Last year we were in a strong position not once but twice and couldn't force a win. If the truth be known when we played them earlier on in the season and we really should have beaten them as we had them 66 for 6 with little to nothing left in the hutch chasing 156. Whatever happens they are tense, tight affairs so maybe this time we may have lady luck on our side – law of averages says the tide has to change sometime.

The 2s have a must win game against Preston who have a long trip South – not really it's only the other side of Hitchin not up near Blackburn. Petty's men need the points as they have worryingly started to slip down the ladder a bit, but that was always going to happen as they have had the top two sides on the bounce. As for Preston, they sit 3 points off the promotion slots so this is going to be a really hard task for the boys, but again with availability good, hopes are high of a profitable weekend for them.

The 3s currently sit just off the promotion shake-up and with a good win can go above their opponents Southgate Compton on Saturday. With football fast approaching I think this is Rocky's last week before he starts refereeing or as I like to call it ruining the game and I am sure Vince Lombardi will be looking for the full allocation of points to give his boys the impetus to keep going for the remainder of the season.

The 4s have Dean Barker for the last time this week, as he succumbs to the bigger round ball as they travel to his old club Hertingfordbury, who appear to be cannon fodder as they have already lost 8 times this season. The 4s have had a cracking middle part of the season as they have won 7 of their last 8 games and are just 5 points off of top spot.

The 5s will have to have their mobiles and calculators out with them as they enter their final weekend of the league season as they entertain Chiltern. The 5s can with a win get in the promotion places on the proviso that neither Letchworth nor Hatfield Crusaders get the 8 points they need to be assured of getting up. For the record Letchworth 5s travel to Hatfield 3s who last week massacred Sawbridgeworth (who are rock bottom and form isn't exactly the best of guides on that one) and Hatfield Crusaders travel to North Enfield who haven't won a game since the 3rd of June and maybe they can do us a favour. Maybe they may have a freak spell of weather in that part of Hertfordshire perhaps?

All I can say is best of luck to all 55 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