

## **BAR INCREASE THE LEAD AT THE TOP OF THE TABLE**

### **Saturday**

**Hertford 194 for 9 in 46 overs**

**Potters Bar 195 for 1 in 27 overs**

Potters Bar increased their lead at the head of the table to an impressive 35 points with an utter demolition of Hertford in a display of batting which is now the norm rather than the exception.

On a hideous drizzly, dank almost winters morning, a game of poker was more the call of the day rather than any cricket as the conditions did not allow for any play before lunch. However thanks to some sterling work from masses, play was permitted to start at 1-30 with the game reduced to a 46 / 38 over match. Skipper Len Cooper won a vital toss and asked the visitors to have first use of a pitch which looked a touch green but on the whole would still offer plenty of runs and at a good rate.

Nick Walker opened up and straight away found the gloomy conditions to his liking as he time and again beat the bat in a hostile and fine spell of fast bowling. At the other end Will van der Maat back from his Northants Academy stint struggled early on but soon found a semblance of line and length.

After the Hertford opener Wade found the boundary with some nice square cuts but the first wicket came about by a farcical run out. Canagasabey had a brain melt and was down the same end as his partner not knowing whether to run back or stay where he was. After much confusion Charlie Hodge calmly lobbed the ball to the awaiting Nick Walker who whipped off the bails and the visitors were 19 for 1.

The second wicket didn't take long in following as Wade was beaten for pace by the impressive 'Walks' and his off stump was soon cart wheeling out of the ground and 21 for 2 saw Bar in the ascendancy. This brought Hertford's pro to the wicket and in truth he played and missed time after time to Nick Walker but slowly got his eye in and started to play some majestic shots.

When Walker cleaned up the struggling Lele for 5 it was 41 for 3 and when ex-skipper Scott Ruskin was cleaned up by Nick for just 1 he embarrassed himself somewhat by striking a harmless table and chairs and letting fly with a choice words to all and sundry. With the club celebrating 'veterans' day and with three trustees of the club to witness the behaviour more akin to a child having his ball taken away was very disappointing.

53 for 4 was very nearly 53 for 5 as only the call of no-ball saved Chris Box as Nick Walker had removed his off stump in spectacular style. In fairness Chris Box and the professional Sundan Dias played well and started to move the score along nicely as Walker had come to the end of a fine spell and the bowling of Will van der Maat and Adam Norman, despite being relatively tight didn't look overly penetrating.

With 'veteran' spinner Paul McGee starting to warm up, Dias started to put the 'pedal to the metal' as he took an Adam Norman over for 18 and he passed 50 with a towering six over extra cover off of Paul McGee's second over. His 50 arrived in just 70 balls and contained 3 sixes and 4 fours.

However as Hertford strived for extra runs, wickets kept falling as Chris Box went to a juggled catch at mid wicket handing Will van der Maat his first league wicket for the club for 15 and Sundan Dias went for 60 as he edged to the keeper. That's twice in two weeks Macca has removed the overseas starlet.

But Hertford have always been a side who can put bat to ball and in skipper Rob Darby they had just the man to plough on and put a decent total on the board. He started slowly but soon became accustomed to the pitch and started to find the gaps with embarrassing ease as he and youngster Elliott King put on 47 for 8<sup>th</sup> wicket to take the score past the 150-mark.

Rob Darby lost his partner King for 19 as he went back attempting to cut Paul McGee and ended up missing a quicker ball but still Darby managed to complete a well made 50 at a run a ball. However with the search for quick runs saw catch after catch go down, in what was arguably Bar's poorest display in the field for a long while. After successive drops, Darby picked out Will van der Maat who dived head first and held a fine, low catch at long off. A ball earlier dropped an easy chance at the same position where he literally didn't have to move a muscle.

Some bat on ball at the end of the Hertford innings saw the visitors post a credible 194 for 9 from their 46 overs and leave Bar a shade over 5 an over to reach the target.

Bar opened up in a positive manner and it was Nesan Jeyaratnam who struck 4 majestic boundaries as he looked to tuck into the friendly attack. However Nesan drilled a half volley straight back at Ruskin who gleefully held a good return catch and Bar were 35 for 1.

Lanka de Silva and Steve Gale saw the Bar through to the tea break at 56 for 1 after the final over before the tea break was slapped for 16 to give the boys the needed momentum. Still though Bar needed a further 138 from 27 overs, which given our previous performances this season would be little more than a cakewalk. This wasn't going to be anything else either.

After a pedestrian start after the tea break, Steve Gale and Lanka de Silva simply murdered the Hertford attack to all parts in a blistering assault. The 50 partnership came up in 61 balls and when Stevie G hammered the friendly leg spin of Canagasabay for 17 in his 5<sup>th</sup> over Bar had motored past the 100 mark and also brought up the County players 50 in just 58 balls.

More carnage came as Ruskin found the boundary ropes with greater regularity than I'm sure he's used to and it was in no time that the 100 partnership arrived, 97 balls as Bar were the best part of being home and hosed. Even the change bringing on Dias didn't work as his first over was a mixture of long hops and half volleys and disappeared for 11 and then the sad sight of young James Mead, 15 years of age having to suffer 2 overs for 37 as Hertford had lost the plot.

Lanka de Silva completed his 5<sup>th</sup> half century of the season in 59 balls and despite surviving a run out chance, a shout for leg before and a drop catch Steve Gale completed his maiden Potters Bar 100 which contained 14 fours and 3 sixes. It came off 82 balls in 98 minutes. To complete the game the pair took the partnership to an unbeaten 160 off of 128 balls.

Steve Gale ended up 113\* and Lanka de Silva 51\* as Bar were home with a massive 66 balls to spare and won by a huge 9 wicket margin. Quite simply the batting looks a million dollars and better than I have seen in my time at the club. So far we have lost just 22 wickets in 7 matches, which is probably unprecedented at this level.

As for Hertford, Rob Darby and Sundan Dias' batting apart were pretty poor. In truth they were saved the relegation to League One last year by a merger of 2 clubs. If they bowl and field like this then they could well be in the shake-up again this time around.

Sadly it was a truncated weekend for the rest of the boys. The 3s and 5s were both called off down the school after the incessant rain on Friday night and Saturday morning but the 2s and 4s managed to get in completed games.

Disappointingly, the 2s slipped to another defeat against front running Chorleywood. After batting first Greg Hodge's boys made a spirited 193 all out from nigh on their 53 over allocation. This was bolstered in the main from a fine 91 from Mike Palmer who is starting to hit his straps. Mike was helped along the line by 27 by Mark Taylor and 25 from Luke Owers.

Alas with the hosts 6 down for 130 the roll of the dice didn't fall Greg's way and the hosts scampered to a comfortable win despite the 2s holding all the aces. The boys will need to bounce back quickly but as they have played the majority of the sides near the top I can see it happening sooner rather than later.

But brighter news came from Weston as Bertie Anderson's 4<sup>th</sup> XI got their second win of the season in a tight and enthralling game. Thanks to Rupert Pyrah's 6 for 34 and Alex Whitehouse claiming 4-25, the hosts were skittled for 98. In true Bar fashion, they made a right old dogs dinner of it but crawled over the line 9 down with 7 overs left in the game. A word of congratulations to Alex Whitehouse who capped a fine display as he top scored with 29.

Next week sees the league leaders' travel to Bishops Stortford, who have started well back in the league after a rapid rise. This could be Bar's biggest league test so far so the boys will have to go in focussed and not too confident, although after 6 league wins out of 6 and a rain abandoned 7<sup>th</sup> that could be difficult.

Sunday sees the return of the Evening Standard and sees Bar in uncharted territory as we have reached the last 32. We entertain the superstars of Essex league cricket Saffron Walden who have the likes of Essex staff Tony Palladino, Tim Phillips and Tom Westley along with Joe Holland, Neil Gladwin, Ryan Sparrow, Tim Smith and Giles Ecclestone to call upon. We will have a strong side out but will need to pull out all the stops to beat arguably one of the best club sides in the South of England.

Next week sees the 2s entertain Watford where Greg Hodge could be bolstered by the re-appearance of Andy Colquhoun where a win will be high on the list of priorities. The 3s travel to Totteridge Millhillians 3s, the 4s, skippered by Will Daley entertain Langleybury 3s and finally the 5s travel to town rivals Old Owens 3s.

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

Regards  
Fred