

## **BAR 'WALKER' OVER HERTFORD AS TITLE IS NEARLY WON**

### **SATURDAY**

**Potters Bar 276 for 6 dec. in 52 overs**

**Hertford 60 all out in 25overs**

Potters Bar moved to within a win of the league title with a stroll in Balls Park over the doomed looking Hertford thrashing the hapless hosts by 216 runs.

With Hertford needing a positive result they rather strangely elected to field on a wicket which would turn square second up and in the end as a result of their negative outlook on the game they got just 2 points which was arguably 2 more than they deserved to get!

So losing the toss again, Bar had to do it the hard way by bowling a side out second time for the 4<sup>th</sup> time around but first they had to put a match winning score on the board and they wasted no time in doing so. Without the injured Nesan Jeyaratnam, Bar opened up with Steve Gale and Chris Stead and against some friendly new ball bowling soon as the newly installed electronic scoreboard at Hertford clicking into overdrive.

Steve Gale cut and drove with his usual panache and at the other end for the first time since his debut hundred, Chris Stead started to look like the player he is as he was starting to find the boundary and some form. The 50 partnership arrived in just 67 balls as the hosts were starting to employ negative field settings to try and put a halt on the imposing start.

The first 20 overs saw Bar sat 84 for 0 and looking for a total to come in after 50 overs was certainly on the cards. However 8 balls later Bar lost their first wicket as Steve Gale ran down the wicket and was undone by a full ball which crashed onto the top of middle stump. As the Herts opener looked for a call of no ball as it was over waist high, he'd actually contributed to his own downfall as it's from his original stance and the decision to give him out being totally correct.

A change of bat heralded some greater timing for Chris Stead but he went for 37 as he played all around a straight full delivery from Ruskin and Bar were 117 for 2. Lanka de Silva sadly didn't last long as he was undone by a ball which turned and gripped on the surface and he top edged a dolly catch to the keeper again off Ruskin for 19 and Bar were reigned in a little at 3 for 124 halfway through the 29<sup>th</sup> over.

This brought Bar's skipper Len Cooper to the wicket to join Nick Walker who was looking in imperious form treating the Hertford attack with disdain. The pair took the score through to 166 for 3 from 37 overs at lunchtime with a total of 280 from 50 overs probably the target.

After the lunchbreak, Nick Walker saw a chance to free his arms and go for it and cleared the boundary with relative ease almost at will. The pair completed the second 50 stand in the innings in just 61 balls but Bar did lose Len Cooper for 23 as he got a ball from Ruskin which again turned and gripped on the surface and took his off stump but Bar still had the animals coming in 2 by 2.

Nick Walker brought up his 3<sup>rd</sup> 50 of the season in just 37 balls from 50 minutes with 4 sixes and 3 fours and just 3 balls later he cleared the ropes on successive deliveries as Bar had progressed to

220 for 4 from just 44 overs. The pair had completed the 50 partnership in just 32 balls as the hosts were a demoralised side and Bar could almost score at will.

Nick Walker went clean bowled by Slater, making his debut for a 48-ball 73 which included 7 maximums and 3 boundaries and when Jared Norman went caught at deep midwicket for 20 Bar were 245 for 6 in the 49<sup>th</sup> over.

This then brought Dave Breeze and Adam Norman to the wicket and they blasted 31\* in just 20 balls to allow Len Cooper to declare 8 overs early with 276 on the board setting the hosts 277 to win in a minimum 58 overs at a rate of 4.78 runs per over.

Bar started hungrily and opened up with Nick Walker and the spin of Paul McGee, statistically Bar's two most potent bowlers. It wasn't long before the wickets started to tumble.

Steve Riddle wafted meekly at a wide one from Nick Walker and edged through to keeper Lanka de Silva for 6 and the hosts were 8 for 1 after 3 overs. In the now rampaging Walker's next over saw a bizarre game plan by Hertford number 3 Josh Tooth as he deposited Walker for a 4 and a six over deep cow corner much to the fielders amusement. The fact that they were good clean hits were washed over, as the shots were more at home in a baseball arena. The lack of technique was shown 2 balls later in 'Walks' 4<sup>th</sup> over as Tooth's middle stumps was dislodged and 2 balls later Anderson's off stump was re-arranged as Bar were all over the hosts like a cheap suit.

22 for 3 was soon 28 for 4 as skipper Scott Ruskin fell for old 3-card trick with outswinger, outswinger, outswinger, then a big in-ducker and he was leg before not playing a shot. Hertford's skipper gone for a 6-ball duck and thankfully there was a lack of furniture to re-arrange this time.

With Bar employing umbrella fields there were opportunities to score freely but sadly for the spectator element, who also had to put up with a lack of the bar not being open they had a mismatch to witness.

Paul McGee got in on the act as he had Richard Cordingley caught at bat pad for 1 to make it 37 for 5 and it was soon 38 for 6 as Walker capped an excellent display by bowling Tom Bancroft for a resolute 17 from 39 balls. Walker was taken out of the attack and his 5 for 30 from 10 overs had put Bar well on the way to a handsome win and an 11<sup>th</sup> league win of the season.

Paul McGee had Mohammed caught at silly point for 2 leaving the hosts 7 for 40 and Salim Hussain got in the act catching Slater as he skied one to him at mid-off for 6 and then he removed Will Bancroft bowled for 12 and then had number 11 Beskeen leg before for 1 leaving the hosts bowled out for 60 in just 25 overs. Of the bowlers, Nick Waker took 5 for 30, Paul McGee 3 for 25 from 12 and Sal Hussain 2 for 5 from 3 overs.

Bar, thanks to Bishops Stortford not able to defeat Hemel Hempstead, are 23 points clear at the head of the table and now just need to gain three more points than Stortford at the weekend at the title is ours and promotion to the Premier Division.

As for Hertford, a proud and quality club are by the looks of it, in free-fall. The whole club seem to struggling. No bar facilities open on arguably one of the nicest days of the year is pretty poor and the level of cricket shown by them was abject at best.

So with the early finish, it enabled all the boys to go and watch the 2s, and but they saved their best batting performance of the season for the growing army of watchers.

Set 213 to win from 47 overs we arrived with Bar 35 for 0 off just 7 overs and we were treated to a batting exhibition from 16 year old Tom Pett and the clubs record centurion Mike Palmer as they simply destroyed the Northchurch attack.

Tommy who made 97\* on 25<sup>th</sup> August last year against Watford Town eased to his maiden league hundred with a mixture of aggressive slog sweeps and a great deal of nurdling as the Northern Vicars had no answer to the young left hander.

The pair broke the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI opening partnership of 150 between Nick Lamb and Dave Breeze against North Mymms back on August 24 August 2002 as the pair powered on. Tom Pett survived a decent shout for a catch in the deep although to their fielders credit the ball hit the ground on the half volley and the young left hander was rightly called back and allowed to carry on.

As the victory neared and the clouds gathering, Tom completed his maiden hundred with a clip through wide mid-on and with his old dad and uncle Dave, who has now made less runs than Tom in one innings, stood proudly watching.

The win was completed with 49 balls to spare as Mike ended 89\* and Tommy 119\* from 108 balls. Everyone knew it would be a great education for young Tom to bat with arguably the clubs most experienced batter over the years. Speaking to Mike after he really enjoyed the innings with Tom saying “it was better than batting with his uncle Dave because Tom could take quick singles” and “better than his dad since Tom didn’t get bored and throw his wicket away”

So with the 2 winning by 10 wickets, the 3s had a great game as they had a scores tied game with Preston 2s. The 3s made 190-9 from their allocation with Ben Scarisbrick making 40. Preston needed 7 off the last over and with the last ball of the game the Preston batter ambled a 1 down to third man thinking there was a ball left. Cue the stumps coming out of the ground and the end of the game much to his consternation and his frustration.

With the 4s having a bye week, the 5s scrambled a draw against Met Police Bushey. The rozzers made 197-9 from their 47 overs and Colin Titmuss’ boys made 147 for 9 from their 43 overs in response, which given their season was a positive result for the fellas.

Sunday saw the Presidents XI game and the first time Ian Breeze could have a bona-fide fixture. Despite the rain there was no play before lunch and the normal rubbish spouted in the bar and a relaxing few ales before the play started at 2-30pm. A 35-over a side game ensued with Bar making a competitive 239 for 6. Lanka de Silva made a chanceless 113 off of 107 balls which included 16 boundaries. Len Cooper made 46 from just 39 balls in an innings which included 3 sixes and 5 fours, mainly off of Mark Taylor who was having what appeared a friendly personal duel.

With Sir George being deposited for 52 from 4 overs the big fella went out to opening the batting and gave it back with both barrels as he deposited the Bar attack to all parts. He made a wonderful 88 off of just 64 balls, striking 6 sixes and 7 fours. Dan Blacktopp made a top drawer 53-ball 67 and thanks to a hideous middle order collapse circa Potters Bar CC 1987-99 the Presidents side had lost 5 wickets for 10 in just 20 balls.

The game had gone to the last over and young Tom Rowlands stepped up to the plate after he’d gone for 54 from just 4 overs previous. 2 singles off the first two balls then saw Dave Pett

bowled by an early call of no ball saw Dean Barker stranded and he was run out by half a pitch. 6 needed off 4 balls. Next ball Dave Pett was bowled for 18 as the "you miss I hit" theory was tested to the full from 15 year old Tom Rowlands. Two singles saw 4 needed off the last ball and with Kevin' banger' Walls at the wicket a dot ball ensued and saw the hosts win by 3 runs on a very enjoyable game for all concerned.

Next week sees Bar with a great chance of crowning off a fine season with the chance of winning the league and gaining promotion to the Premier League. As earlier stated we have a lead of 23 points and need just 3 more than the visitors on Saturday, Bishops Stortford, to clinch the title. To their credit Stortford have been magnificent this season and is testimony to just how well they have done.

The 2s may well see the return of Sir Charles of Blackheath as they travel to Welwyn Garden City and the 3s who are hovering just above the drop zone need a win to probably secure their status in Division 6 for another year as they travel to Ware. The 4s who are safe travel to Bushey 2s and the 5s travel to North Mymms who are trying to gain promotion but the boys who are already looking forward to the delights of Division 13, will be looking to catch old foes Old Owens.

So that's it until next week where hopefully I will be reporting on Bar clinching promotion into the big league remember, the futures is bright the future is Potters Bar

Regards  
Fred