

RUN GLUT AND A LAST GASP WIN

Saturday

Potters Bar 279 for 8 off 49 overs

Langleybury 265 all out in 69.5 overs

Potters Bar won for the 10th time in the league campaign, as many as they managed in their 2003 title win but they still only lead the table by 8 points going into the last 3 games of the season.

On an oddly bright morning with rain forecast from around 6pm Bar needed to try and win in double quick time and winning the toss would have certainly helped. Sadly Bar lost the toss and found them batting first on a batsman friendly wicket where runs would be plentiful.

With Nesan Jeyaratnam out for probably the rest of the season with a broken thumb, Chris Stead opened up with ever present Steve Gale as Bar looked to start positively. Alas it didn't start too cleverly as Chris Stead was cleaned up for 4 with the score on 14 in just the 5th over. This brought Lanka de Silva to the wicket and with Steve Gale starting to hit his straps the rate increased.

With the scoring rate increasing by the over and the visitors still kept themselves in the hunt by taking wickets. Lanka de Silva went caught at a short mid-on position for 9 and Bar were 2 for 47 in the 11th over. Nick Walker came to the wicket and another imperious square drive by Steve Gale brought up his 5th boundary and the Bar fifty in 73 balls. Nick Walker played two beautiful shots which brought up 2 boundaries but he chopped on for 10 and 62 for 3 saw Len Cooper promote himself up the order after his whirlwind effort at Welwyn Garden City 6 days previous.

This was the catalyst for Bar to step on the accelerator pedal and as they did this the visitors attack and fielding became more and more ragged. Len Cooper dispatched Cheeseman for a huge six and then repeated it in the bowler's next over with some of the sweetest timing anyone would wish to see. The hundred was brought up in the 20th over and the signs for the relegation threatened hosts were looking ominous. The pair brought up their 50 partnership in just 49 balls.

Steve Gale brought up his 5th 50 of the league campaign in 68 balls which contained 9 top drawer boundaries as Bar took the game by the scruff of the neck and started to bat Langleybury out of the game. The introduction of left arm seamer Steve Carter did nothing to boost the visitors tiring attack as Len Cooper dispatched two more maximums in his first over to take the score up to 133 for 3 after 24 overs.

Disaster then struck as Steve Gale ran himself out for 60 as it took a direct hit to get his wicket after a smart piece of work by Amin at mid-off and at 133 for 4 this saw Jared Norman come to the wicket. As Jared struggled early on, due to an ear infection, Bar skipper Len Cooper motored on. Len brought up his first league 50 of the season in 52 balls in just under an hour at the crease, striking 4 sixes and 3 fours in an entertaining innings.

The bowling was now 'average' apart from Tauseef Kazmi whose mixture of off-breaks, slower and quicker balls was keeping the Bar batting at one end in check. The 150 came up in the 30th over and it was a case of how many and how quickly Bar would get them before in the inevitable declaration.

In the last over before lunch, Bar lost skipper Len Cooper for 62 as he was caught at mid-on leaving Bar 170 for 5 off of 34.3 overs.

David Breeze joined Jared Norman after the bangers and mash and showed his intentions immediately after lunch as the 3 balls remaining after the loss of the wicket before lunch were dispatched for 2 fours and a well run 3. The "Catherine Wheel" then launched a hideously short ball by Gregg Cooper for an enormous six. Alas Dave Breeze got carried away from the support from the outer as he went for a big shot too many and lost his middle stump for a 9-ball 18. 194 for 6 from 37 overs saw Salim Hussain stride to the wicket on a run of scores Michael Vaughan would be proud to call his own, but he and Jared Norman batted Bar into an unbeatable position.

The 200 came up in the 39th over as Salim struck a nice boundary through backward point and the visitors were now looking a tired team as Jared Norman took advantage of some pretty average fayre. Bar upped the rate as both batters took advantage of bowlers bowling both sides of the wicket and the runs came freely. The 250 came up in the 46th over thanks to a bout of 4 byes and the ensuing declaration was now imminent.

Jared Norman went for 47 as he was clean bowled. Jazzy faced 76 balls and struck 2 sixes and 2 fours. Adam Norman came and went quicker than the hopes of a top four finish at Tottenham and Will van der Maat and Sal Hussain saw the total up to a formidable 279 for 8 from 49 overs, some 11 shy of their full allocation. Salim Hussain ended 42* from just 33 balls which saw him blast 4 sixes and 2 fours.

So Langleybury were set 280 to win in a mammoth 61 overs at just a shade under 4.6 runs per over. They started like a house on fire in truth and found the bowling rather friendly as Sal Hussain struggled to find any line or length whatsoever and Nick Walker saw three fours disappear and all of a sudden the visitors were 40 for 0 off just 5 overs. However wickets weren't far from happening as the Bury skipper Gregg Cooper was put down in regulation manner by Steve Gale at square leg. The 50 partnership arrived in just 46 balls which gave the visitors hope of getting somewhere close to bars imposing total.

However as predicted the wickets came as Gregg Cooper (24) gave Steve Gale a chance to atone for his earlier drop which he took with ease and the score was 53 for 1. 13 balls later it was 57 for 2 as Nick Walker was too good and too quick for Amin as he was caught and bowled for 0 and Bar had the bit between their teeth.

Bashir and the youngster Will Oxley batted with a semblance of control but a 3 wicket burst in 28 balls saw Bar in the pound seats as Len Cooper accounted for Bashir for 11 as he was brilliantly caught at square cover by Dave Breeze. Oxley went for 33 from 59 balls as he was well taken at slip by Jared Norman and went Kazmi had a brain melt, stumped by a country mile off of the bowling of Paul McGee saw the relegation threatened side 5 for 79.

Kazmi's behaviour was pretty bizarre as he attempted 90% of his shots one handed and tried to whack every ball in his 12 ball stay at the wicket. He also as well as batting, wanted to umpire the game, getting embroiled in a row which quite frankly had nothing whatsoever to do with him. With him 'exchanging' views with anyone who'd listen and showing all and sundry the maker of his bat by waving it around, it came as no surprise when he was stumped and he'd actually managed to talk himself out!

So 79 for 5 saw Langleybury still need 201 to win from a minimum of 42 overs but with little to nothing left in the proverbial hutch. However not for the first time this season Bar went through

the motions a little, tried to entice the visitors into going for the total and as talented youngster Josh Godden got in behind it started to play some lovely shots. He and his partner Williams played with a semblance of control and easily started to put runs on the board. The two saw the total up past the 100 and the pair had sped to a 50 partnership in 89 balls as Godden particularly was starting to bat like a bona fide batter as he sped to his maiden league 50 in an innings which included 9 fours off of 61 balls.

As tea arrived the pair had put on 69 and the visitors were 148 for 5 with a minimum of 23 overs remaining to score an unlikely 120 to win the game. Still the pair batted sensibly but with the more circumspect Williams hogging the strike a little after tea and Bar putting the ball in better areas the breakthrough finally arrived. Williams half pushed forward and edged to keeper ex Sri Lankan test keeper Lanka de Silva for a 62-ball 19. Williams and Godden had put on a credible 81 runs in 145 balls.

At the wicket now was Alex Gunning who joined Josh Godden who was having a ball as the fields were up and free hits were more than readily available. Nick Walker was remarkably dispatched for 14 by the number 8 signalling the visitors 200 had been reached in the 53rd over.

Still toiling away at The Walk end was Paul McGee and he forced the one poor shot Josh Godden played as he was deceived in the flight and Lanka de Silva had stumped him quicker than you could say hard luck matey. Godden went for a fine 84 off of 118 balls and struck 14 boundaries. 213 for 7 and Bar were now sensing victory and gave them the energy to try that little bit harder as the tail was well and truly exposed,

Six balls later Alex Gunning who'd played nicely for his 33-ball 30 played a poor shot and was bowled by the re-invigorated Nick Walker, making the score 219 for 8 but with 54 minutes left for play. Lee Channer came in but his partners calling wasn't the best and the mother of all mix-ups allowed Nick Walker and Len Cooper to team up and run Carter out for 15 and Bar were nearly home.

Walking to the wicket was Andy Cheeseman, my fellow scorer advising me to start up the engines as dear old Cheesy is the original walking wicket. Well fair play to the old boy as he managed by hook or crook to survive for a ridiculous period of time. So long did the last pair stay they broke their all-time 10th wicket partnership in this league. The 250 arrived in the 68th over and with 17 minutes remaining. Bar had their chances though. They had a stumping which looked out as much as Lanka's was last weekend and 2 firm chances which sadly Adam Norman couldn't get a hand on at silly point.

With great relief though Paul McGee flighted a slower delivery up to Cheeseman, who played with firm hand straight to Jared Norman at silly mid-off to spark rapturous celebrations and saw Bar keep their lead at the top of the table. For Langleybury they gave a gallant reply although they did receive the best part of 70 overs with arguably another 4 left in the time remaining. Teams at the bottom must try to win games instead of trying to draw their way out of games otherwise it's sayonara!

Of the bowlers a massive effort by Paul McGee who bowled 29.5 overs and took 4 for 92. Nick Walker bowled 26 overs and took 3 for 111. Len Cooper took 2 for 13 from 9 and was probably under bowled, but Bar stay top with just three matches remaining.

The 2s had a shocker at chez Depala (Old Finchleians) as they were skittled out for just 93. In truth at 60 for 7 they did well to get as many as they did. Skipper Greg Hodge top scored with

just 18* and ran out of partners. The hosts tapped them off with little alarm and got them for 3. Thanks to some early season wins and some pretty poor sides in the drop zone, their last three matches look dead rubbers but they must look to improve to maintain their reputations as much for their own pride as anyone else's.

The 3s lost narrowly to Broxbourne 2s but have managed to climb out of the danger zone, with a frustrating performance. After a bright start Bar had slipped from 38 for 0 to 67-6 but thanks to 36 from Tom Rowlands, extras top scoring with 40 and 33 from Cherry Bob Daley, bar crept up to 193 from their 53 overs. After getting the skipper of the visitors first ball and having them 46 for 5, 106 for 7 Bar had teflon hands and dropped more catches than a schoolgirls game of rounders. The mid-table visitors got home 8 down with 2 overs remaining.

The 4s defied all logic and won at Offley & Stopsley to arguably end their chances of relegation. Bar made 193-9 thanks to skipper Will Daley 75 and Charlie Scutt clubbing 53. Spencer Randon then took a season best of 6 for 59 and young Steve Brown took 2 for 20 which bowled the hosts out for 165 giving the boys a 28 run win. The 5s put on a greatly improved performance and restricted Ware 2s to 184. The 5s thanks to James Knight's 37 saw them need 12 to win with one wicket remaining but it wasn't to be and they finished 9 short.

Next week sees the early starts for the 1s as they travel to rock bottom Hertford who we cruised to a 9 wicket win back in June. Another win will see us arguably 1 more win away from the title but it has to be taken a game at a time. Hertford area club in transition and can easily whack their way to a win but Bar should be too strong. The 2s will be looking for a better effort this week as they entertain the Northern Vicars from Northchurch who are safely in mid-table. The 3s play host to Preston 3s who have little or nothing to play for and the 5s who are drinking in the last chance saloon travel to fellow strugglers Met Police Bushey aiming to gain their first win since the first day of the season.

Sunday sees one of the highlights of the season with it being Presidents Day. After last years disappointment of having to play a County Cup Semi Final, its Ian Breeze's first real day and I for one hope the sun comes out to make an appearance to make it a grand occasion. Two strong sides will be in competition but it's the day that makes the game rather than the other way around.

Finally congratulations to both the U-11 and the U-15 on getting through to the County Finals which I believe they are being held at Mill Hill Village on Sunday. Surely somewhere a little more salubrious could have been chosen for such a prestigious occasion?

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

Regards
Fred