

GALE RETURNS TO BLOW WEST HERTS AWAY

Saturday

West Herts 255 for 6 in 60 overs

Potters Bar 256 for 6 in 48 overs

Bar won again for the 9th time this season in 12 matches and are still no nearer to winning the league as Bishops Stortford are hot on the boys heels.

For arguably the first time this season, the sun was shining, the weather was warm and sultry and skipper Len Cooper won the toss and had no hesitation in putting the visitors into bat on what could only be described as a road.

With West Herts having the prolific Neale Parlane, he started like the proverbial house on fire as Len Cooper's second and third balls disappeared to the midwicket boundary for four and his intentions were clear. But in truth whilst Parlane is a top, top player, the other end was always going to be the means of attack. Waqas Chaudhry nibbled nervously and was taken well down at slip by Jared Norman for 1. Then uncharacteristically Steve Clark slapped a half volley straight to cover point where Dave Breeze took a regulation catch and the visitors were 25 for 2.

However Neale Parlane was starting to look in imperious form as he struck boundary after boundary but the other end was still having issues. West Herts skipper Matt Smith went for 8 as he tamely shovelled one to square leg where Will van der Maat took a diving catch. 42 for 3 saw Spencer Fan join the run machine and they slowly started to re-build the tatters of the opening 50 or so minutes.

Still though the New Zealander Parlane, who topped his home countries averages in the winter ploughed on. He batted more circumspectly than of previous innings. His 50 came up in 74 balls and he as content to bat the 60 overs and see his side up to 260 – 270. Lunch arrived and the visitors were sat 112 for 3 with Parlane 64* and Spencer Fan chopping his way to 31* defying all logic, squirting the ball through and over the umpteen gulley fielders placed to stop it.

After lunch Bar didn't have the intensity of the first session and let the game drift a bit. Parlane kept batting but Spencer Fan whose not played a great deal of cricket for a good few reasons, was starting to get a bit twitchy and it came as no surprise as he succumbed, caught again by Jared Norman off the bowling of Will van der Maat for 46. 136 for 4 saw the Middlesex Academy player Will Jones come to the fore as he and Parlane took the score past 150 with some fine cricket shots as Bar looked short of ideas and short on wickets.

However they got a stroke of luck as Jones drilled the ball back at Len Cooper only for him to deflect the ball onto the stumps and see the highly unlucky Neale Parlane run out by a couple of feet for 93. He struck 15 fours in a 125 ball stay and Bar had found more life. Alas that was soon drained away as Craig Sanders came to the party and dispatched the ball to all parts. A 34 ball innings saw the Colonel muster up 51 runs in an innings which contained 3 sixes and 5 fours. He and young Will Jones put on 79 in just 60 balls and saw the visitors post a highly respectable 255 for 6 from their 60 overs. Of the bowlers Len Cooper took the plaudits with a 21 over spell where he took 3 for 75.

So needing around 5 an over to win and stay a clear game ahead of Stortford we needed to bat well against an attack that are capable of bowling anyone out on their day. We got off to another

flyer as Steve Gale and Nesan Jeyaratnam tucked into Steve Clark who offered them width and a fair bit of pace on the ball. Alas with Bar going nicely, Nesan Jeyaratnam was adjudged leg before for 19 and when Lanka de Silva chopped onto his stumps for just 2 Bar were 57 for 2 in the 13th over of their reply.

However with Lanka gone this was the cue for Steve Gale to really step up to the plate and go big. He and Chris Stead started to bat and it wasn't long before Galey got to 50, 66 balls and 72 minutes to be exact. He'd struck a six and 8 boundaries. At the other end with Steve Gale going so well, Chris Stead was happy to pat back the ball and Bar went into tea 108 for 2 off of 26 overs, still wanting 148 to win from 24 overs. With West Herts bowling their overs at a crawl, we were never going to get more than the minimum requirement of 50 overs back.

So over 6 runs per over required and Bar started positively. Chris Stead launched his first shot in anger for 6 but was deceived by a quicker ball from Herts Academy Chaudhry for 11 off 39 balls. Adam Norman came to the wicket but was starting to play second fiddle to a now in the zone Steve Gale. An enormous six took him to 99 and the Bar to within 100 to win with 18 overs remaining. His 100 came up with a firm cover drive which gave him his second century of the league campaign. It came in just 112 balls, a shade over 2 hours and he'd hit 2 sixes and 13 fours.

Bar lost Adam Norman for 13 as he edged to keeper Parlane off of the skipper Matt Smith for 13 but this brought in a rejuvenated Jared Norman and from ball one he showed his intentions. Steve Gale faced just 6 balls out of the next 39 and this saw Jared make a whirlwind 37 in 33 balls, with a six and 5 fours to take Bar tantalisingly close to a 9th league win of the season.

Jared Norman went for 37 and then lost Steve Gale for 128 off of 127 balls in a stay at the wicket which saw him find the ropes 16 times and clear them three times. Bar were now 223 for 6, still needing 33 from 45 balls. Len Cooper saw the boys nearer to victory but he went caught by Parlane again after a top edged ballooned into the air off Sanders and it took another cameo from Dave Breeze 16* off 15 balls and Dean Dass 5* from 4 to bring the bacon and 25 points home.

Bar are now still 27 points clear but with games running starting to drain away every win takes us closer to what we wanted to achieve at the start of the season. Despite a poor performance last week, this win more than made up for that no-show and the boys are a confident team and feel they can beat all-comers.

This week saw a draw for the twos in which they suffered some highs and lows. After the hosts won the toss and batted, the bottom of the league side were at one stage 170 for 2. Thanks to a good finish by skipper Greg Hodge's team they restricted the Abbots to 221 for 7 from their allocation. However, the 2s hadn't scored 200 all season and needed to break the habit of a lifetime to win the game. They finished 8 short, 8 runs shy, so they got the 200 but not quite enough to win the game and 30 points, nor the lion's share of the points. Alex Robinson made 64 and Mark Taylor a hard hitting and boundary filled 52 and there was a cheeky 41 not out and a re-inker in Dave Rocks' final league game of the season.

The 3s saw another defeat although the result wasn't a massive surprise. Bar batted first and made 130 all out in 40 overs and this was bolstered by 32 from the evergreen number 11 Rupert Pyrah. In truth Hatch End had little problems in tapping them off as they lost just 3 wickets but with the hosts nearer the top its not games like this the boys ought to be overly concerned about getting beaten in.

The 4s came up against a player who really ought not to have been playing as quite frankly he isn't a Division 9 player. Mymms 3s had a guy who is a lot better than his level and played beautifully and made 100. The visitors racked up 250 for 3 but hats off to the boys as they made 180 before the last wicket was taken. Charlie Scutt made 62 and there was some good batting by young Luke Watling who made a swashbuckling 32.

The 5s on the other hand thought they had finally got a positive result with North Enfield 3s sadly having to call it a day in Division 12. This means all of North Enfield's games are now deemed as void and all the points are re-jigged. It now means the 5s are stone cold bottom but it will mean in future North Enfield won't have to bother themselves to see if it's rained in Potters Bar if their game falls foul of the weather.

BRILLIANT BAR STRIDE INTO THE LAST EIGHT

Sunday

Potters Bar 213 for 9 in 50 overs

High Wycombe 150 all out in 38.5 overs

Well cover me in flour and eggs and bake me for forty minutes, Bar have only gone and beaten arguably the most successful side to ever compete in the Home Counties Premier League and they have now gone through to the last eight of the Evening Standard Cricket Trophy.

On a stinking hot day, Len Cooper won the toss and had little hesitation in having a bat on a wicket that looked a good and true one. Centurion from the previous day Steve Gale sprinted out of the blocks with an array of boundaries as the Wycombe attack struggled with the fielding restrictions and Bar were heading for a challenging total.

The 50 partnership came up in just 62 balls as again the young opening partnership ran well and batted sensibly. Yet again Galley and Nesan found the ropes with a semblance of ease as Steve Gale raced to another 50 in just 38 balls with his 10th boundary of a whirlwind innings. Sadly though the innings came to an abrupt halt as he played too early on another attempted pull and top edged it to mid on and Bar were 64 for 1 in just the 11th over.

Will van der Maat was promoted up the order to a number 3 birth but in truth struggled a wee bit and he was caught off the leg spin of Gloucestershire's Matt Gitsham for 1 and Bar were 85 for 2 and just 17 overs had passed by.

After yesterday's whirlwind innings, Jared Norman and Nesan Jeyaratnam took the score passed the hundred mark but it was clear that High Wycombe's spinners were going to have a major say in the piece as Sketchley and Curzon-Tomson bowled at times beautifully on a pitch that was starting to grip and bite a touch.

Bar then started to toil as the spinners got their lines and lengths, the rate slowed to a crawl and the wickets were starting to tumble. Jared Norman was out foxed by Sketchley and was stumped down the legside for 13, Nesan Jeyaratnam went leg before sweeping for a fine 46 and Adam

Norman went to one that kept low and castled him for just 1. Bar had gone from 112 for 2 in 23.5 overs to 116 for 5 in just 24 balls.

However Len Cooper and Dave Breeze got their heads down and rotated the strike and batted nicely and their partnership was to get Bar back in the game. Again Breezey struck the ball beautifully through the cover region and skipper Len played the quieter role but still struck a couple of fine boundaries.

The 150 was brought up in the 36th over and the boys brought up their 50 partnership with a trademark scorching extra cover drive by Dave Breeze. But still the Wycombe bowlers stuck to their task in the red hot sun and broke the partnership and this brought another flurry of wickets.

Skipper Len Cooper went for 25 as new ball bowler Paul Sawyer hit the top of middle stump, Dean Dass went leg before for 0 and Tom Coughlan went for 1 as he was adjudged leg before, again off of Sawyer for 1 and Bar had gone from 168 for 6 to 172 for 8 with overs trickling away.

When the Catherine Wheel that is Dave Breeze was caught at long on for an impressive 39 from just 42 balls Bar were 184 for 9 with 37 balls remaining. However with some sensible batting and an 'average' last 6 overs from the visitors, Bar crept up past the 200-mark and thanks to a majestic pick and mix from Paul McGee in the 48th over and one from Dave Rock in the final over Bar got up to a respectable 213 for 9 from their 50 overs. The 10th wicket put on an unbeaten 29 in 37 balls and with that gave Bar a slight sniff. For them to pull it off they had to bowl and field like demons. The large crowd weren't to be disappointed.

Ex-Sussex player and Director of Cricket Keith Newell was first to go for a 5-ball duck as he chopped on and Will van der Maat had the breakthrough. Gregg Pooley then tickled one behind off of skipper Len Cooper, whose really bowling well at the moment for 3 and the visitors were 26 for 2 in the 7th over. At the other end though the Wycombe Warriors had Leo Sandino-Taylor; a player who struck the ball like a dream and placed the spectators in physical danger on a ball by ball basis. However, with wickets tumbling and Mr Taylor taking more chances than Fernando Torres, Bar had a chance.

The visitors 50 came up in the 10th over and with Sandino-Taylor blazing away Bar were starting to lose the early optimism but then an inspired change brought a change in the fortunes and a little luck. Nesan Jeyaratnam was brought into the attack and second ball enticed Paul Sawyer to slap a half tracker straight down Dave Breeze's throat for 15. The batsman crossed and Sandino-Taylor's brilliant innings of 46 from 31 balls came to an abrupt halt as he got a leading edge off a slower, loopier Jeyaratnam delivery which was tell taken by Len Cooper. When experienced left arm spinner Paul McGee's quicker ball got Morgan trapped in front Bar were in dreamland. The Warriors had gone from 65 for 2 to 70 for 5 in just 26 balls.

But with good sides come long batting line-ups and Gloucestershire player Matt Gitsham and the keeper Cranfield-Thompson played nicely and with a great deal of sense and belief and for a while got Wycombe back into the game and had Bar scratching their heads at how they were going to close this game out.

The 100 came up in the 25th over, and the pairs 50 partnership came up in 63 balls and Bar were starting to panic a touch. Still through, excellent leadership and a great deal of support from the sidelines and one particular JJ Hackett Bar weren't going to let this big boy wriggle away.

Again it was the left arm spin of Nesan Jeyaratnam who got 2 wickets in 2 balls. First of all an attempted sweep found the top edge of Gitsham's bat and he was well taken at short fine leg by Paul McGee. Gitsham played well and you could see why the County rate his services. He made 44 from 61 balls but today it just wasn't going to be enough. As the batters crossed, Cranfield-Thompson went leg before for 16.

131 for 5 was now 131 for 7 and Bar were sniffing glory. Sketchley went for a 12-ball duck as he found the safe hands of Dave Breeze at point off young Will van der Maat and despite a 16 run partnership between Pat Fallis and Richard Curzon-Tomson it was another 2 wickets in consecutive balls which nailed the coffin lid shut on our illustrious visitors. Adam Norman got a ball which he managed to jag back and hit the top of Curzon-Tomson's middle stump and the victory was completed as Dave Rock dived forward and clawed a fine catch to remove Downing for first ball duck.

The visitors were rightfully crest-fallen. We had strangled a highly talented team who on another day would have waltzed to the total required. But today was Potters Bar's day and a deserved win was rightfully gained. Wycombe were bowled out for 150 and Bar were now through to play Sunbury on Sunday 3rd August with the winners of that tie granted a Semi Final home game against the top of the Surrey Premier League Wimbledon on Sunday 17th August.

Next week and the big games just keep on coming. Saturday sees the 1s travel to stone cold bottom of the league Hemel Hempstead, still with a 27 point lead over Bishops Stortford who cant seem to do anything wrong at the moment. Sunday sees the last eight of the Standard and a trip to Sunbury who sit 2nd bottom of the Surrey Premier League, but like with all games in this cup we will be there punching well above our weight.

The 2s who need a couple of wins to ensure Division 2 cricket next season entertain Raj and his troops from Northwood Town. The 3s and 5s both have home games against Letchworth's 3s and 5s with both teams needing wins to clamber from the nether regions of the table and the 4s travel to Stevenage to take on their 3rd string.

So after a wonderful weekend, have a good week and remember the futures bright, the future is Potters Bar

Regards
Fred