

## **RAIN SCUPPERS BARS TITLE CHANCES**

### **Saturday**

**Millhillians 189 for 8 off 60 overs**

**Potters Bar 180 for 6 in 39 overs**

Bar now find themselves as outsiders for the Division 2 East title as rain and a below par display scuppered their chances in a foul day at Headstone Lane against struggling Millhillians.

After winning the toss on a beautiful pitch, Bar skipper Lenny Cooper thought the overcast, muggy conditions would aide the Bar attack early on and had no hesitation in asking the hosts to bat first. In the earlier meeting at The Walk in similar damp and miserable conditions Bar rolled Millhillians out for just 90 and with a much weakened team, Bar were looking to win the game quickly before the predicted weather homed in on the ground.

The start was good. Despite wicket keeper Guy Thatcher being unable to start due to him being lost and stuck in heavy traffic, Bar began bang on the button. Kash Weeraratne was on target straight away, although the same couldn't have been said for Lenny Cooper as he struggled with the gale force wind which was affecting both his run and his control.

The first wicket arrived and it was a massive wicket. David Dawson whose made two first class hundreds for Tasmania and a man whose last three scores have been 165\*, 70 and 145 slapped a short ball to Nesan Jeyaratnam who juggled and held a fine low catch. 11 for 1 in the 8<sup>th</sup> over and to get a man of David Dawson out so quickly and so cheaply had Bar believing they could roll the hosts cheaply.

However at the other end, Millhillians had Will Porterfield who played in all 9 matches of Ireland's World Cup experience in the West Indies and averaged just under 20, including 85 against Bangladesh. He slowly started to settle in against the Bar attack but gave a gift of a chance as the ball went between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> slip at a regulation height and at no great pace. He was 15 at the time and set about to make Bar pay for that miss.

With Porterfield, Sean O'Brien, the skipper of the hosts started to attack the bowling and this was the key for the Bar to have a very poor hour or so. A succession of long hops, bungers, wide deliveries, just asking to be hit and in all fairness the strugglers didn't need any second invitations to hit through the line. After a sedate start Millhillians had rushed passed the 50 mark as the sun made a brief appearance and with this the '50 partnership between Porterfield and O'Brien was reached in just 45 balls.

Skipper O'Brien went, well caught in the gully as he inside edged the ball onto his pad which looped up and Matt Webb held a fine low catch. 73 for 2 brought in ex-captain Andrew Blincoe and this is a chap who normally bats 7. This was how short they were. He took advantage of some extremely average fayre served up from the now tiring and struggling Lenny Cooper and Gavin Baker also struggled with the windy conditions as he couldn't find either his line or his length on a consistent basis.

The Millhillians 100 was easily past in the 23<sup>rd</sup> over and the game was really slipping out of Bars grasp. Will Porterfield brought up his 50 off of 56 balls in an innings containing 10 fours.

Thankfully, Lenny Cooper took the pace off the ball and introduced left arm spinners Paul Barker and Paul McGee and although Paul Barker started excellently Paul McGee found the conditions tricky to start with and like Lenny and Gavin found the boundary boards easily early on.

However, with pressure being exerted by Paul Barker, Macca finally found his range and nipped out Blincoe for 24 as he offered catching practice to Paul Barker at midwicket. This made the score 121 for 3 in the 31<sup>st</sup> over and the hosts managed to make the lunch break without any further alarms and were sat at 137 for 3 off of 36 overs. With the clouds gathering Bar were behind the 9-ball and Bar needed to buck their ideas up and get some quick wickets.

In fairness they did and the next 24 overs brought just 52 runs but this doesn't hide the truth that Porterfield apart, the batsmen were not of the leagues class and had not only big floppy ears but a serious condition of mixametosis.

The big wicket of Will Porterfield went with the score on 172 as his 129 ball vigil was ended. He ended on 84, hit 12 fours and arguably ended Bars chances of victory as the clouds were gathering and the weather was closing in quicker than the end of the season. This brought a spell of play where Bar took 4 wickets for 1 run in 20 balls as both Paul Barker and Paul McGee made the batsmen look as if they had never picked up a bat before. Millhillians were now 173 for 8 with 9.4 overs remaining and Bar needed to whip out the last two and quickly.

Alas for Bar, Coakley and Desai put on 16 in 58 balls, 9 of which came in the last over and this frustrated the boys as the chase of 190 to win in a minimum of 50 overs was set. The truth of the matter however was that the main belt of rain was expected at 5pm and this meant Bar had around 30 overs and with the hosts having no bowling whatsoever, proved as their keeper Dave Dawson opened the bowling we had to go for it big time. Unfortunately, although we didn't crawl towards the total, we never put them under any severe pressure.

Nesan Jeyaratnam and Matt Webb opened up and comfortably went to 50 in 95 balls but the weather had now started to turn. It was getting darker and the loss of Nesan Jeyaratnam for 27 off of 64 balls brought in the hard hitting Kash Weeraratne. The partnership was going nicely with Matt Webb but at 4-49pm the rains came and off went the players. The score was 119 for 1 off of 32.4 overs. The bowling was mediocre at best and nobody could moan **yet** at the over rate as they were whipping through the overs at over 20 per hour.

There was a 100 minute delay and after some deliberation Bar were allowed 37 minutes to get 71 runs required for the win. Safe in the knowledge that Welwyn Garden City had hammered North Mymms, we simply had to go for it. Yes the ball was going to be wet, we knew Millhillians would drag the game out as long as possible but we had to go for it.

Matt Webb brought up his 50, his first for the club off of 88 balls and the histrionics began by the hosts. Yes conditions were not the best, but even considering the draw points we had 7 points, Millhillians 6. The odds were that we would chase right down to the last ball and risk everything to win. That meant lots of cheap wickets, cheap points the hosts did not deserve, yet they dried the ball (even when it went straight through to the keeper) at every available occasion, moved players from long on to long leg etc. The keeper and the number 11 all had far too much to say from themselves with the latter looking no more a cricketer than Vera Duckworth and the abuse that Kash received was at times ridiculous.

Matt Webb went for 68 when the score was 140 as he held out to long on and wickets started to tumble in a hectic time for all concerned.

Kash Weeraratne (44) was inches away from bringing up his 50 with a maximum but he was brilliantly caught at deep midwicket and it was 143 for 3. The wickets kept coming as Mark Taylor (0) was comically run out by O'Brien in almost 'It's a Knockout' fashion and Lenny Cooper was stumped for just 2 and Bar had slumped unsurprisingly to 166 for 6.

In fairness Dave Breeze made an 8-ball 17 not out which included 2 sixes and a four and arguably should be coming in a little higher as he is ending the season in a positive manner. Bar finished agonisingly short on 180 for 6 off of just 39 overs. In the 37 minutes allowed after the rain break Millhillians bowled just 38 deliveries (6.2 overs) which is clearly not right. Please don't get me wrong, they were entitled to do so and we like every club has slowed the game down, sometimes to farcical ways like Saturday. To have an over rate in that 37 minute period akin to 10.1 overs in the last hour is not on.

**Until the rules change where teams must bowl a minimum requirement of overs in the last hour then these ridiculous circumstances will continue to occur and ruin games of cricket, not just for players but for officials and spectators alike.**

There is no reason why a side shouldn't bowl a minimum of 15 overs in the last hour. 15 overs at 4-minutes per over. That isn't asking the world and the league need to move with the times. Potters Bar have also been guilty of slowing the game down at Stevenage and recently at Hemel Hempstead and it almost cost us a point through a slow over rate. It will benefit all cricket and the times of captains taking an age to bowl the last hour, whether they are up with the rate or not is by the by.

Saying that though, yes we would have rightly cruised to victory had the weather had stayed away but everyone knew the time it was due to hit us and I don't think we were pro-active enough. We did well to get as close as we did considering the field placings, the histrionics from the home side but we arguably lost it in the first session as we missed a simple slip chance (at this level), didn't bowl well enough and gave them too many four balls. They, Dawson and Porterfield apart were a weak eleven, no question on that and I am afraid it may bite us on the arse come September 9.

The 2s had a decent showing from a depleted line-up as they took on mid-table Ampthill Town. The Ampthill mob (I had to put that in) won the toss and made 193 all out in just over 52 overs. From being 90-odd for 0 it was a good recovery from Greg Hodge's boys.

Luke Owers took another 4 wickets (4 for 48) and that's him into the 30's league wickets for his first season in 2<sup>nd</sup> XI league cricket and is arguably a shoe in for the most improved and 2<sup>nd</sup> XI club player of the season. Chris Boyce chipped in with 3 for 24 and there were a couple of wickets for Charlie Hodge.

Greg Hodge tried a new opening partnership and opened with Charlie Hodge 38\* and Tom Pett 42\* and they took the score to a highly credible 98 for 0 off of 24 overs before the rain took a hold and washed the end of the game out. With Bar well placed for a win they will be disappointed that the rain had spoiled their chances of keeping on the heels of the top 6.

The 3s had the better of a rain ruined clash against runaway leaders St Margaretsbury 2s. The Bars third string racked up a fine 231 for 8 from 52 overs. This was in the main thanks to 97 from Ramaweta and 46 from Michael John as they put on 116 in just 16 overs. Unbelievably the St Margaretsbury umpire attempted to dock 9 runs for the deliberate running down the pitch. It

was reduced to 5 and arguably the first time any Potters Bar side has been on the wrong or right side of the infamous penalty runs. All I hope is that he got the signal right if he wanted to start playing silly buggers! The leaders reply was stunted to just 30 for 1 after 16 overs before the rain called a halt to proceedings with neither side really overjoyed with the weather.

The 4s will have to wait another week before they can secure promotion for the second successive year as rain ruined their clash with Abbots Langley 3s. Cheeko's men bowled the hosts out for 152 thanks to 3-39 from Nick Dalakakis and 3 for 5 from young Henry Bailes. Spencer Randon's 2 for 41 must also not be forgotten. With the 4s sat 25 for 0 and seen off the opening bowlers, the rain came and that was that.

Congratulations must go to the 5s as they secured promotion to Division 12 as they got the better of a draw against mid-table Redbourn. Details are sketchier than a hotel fire in Newquay I'm afraid as the 5s made 163 from their 47 overs. The visitors made just 130 for 7 and there was the call of honours even. Well done though to Robert Anderson and Colin Titmuss as they have done exceedingly well to get promoted even after the performances from Dave Rock who came down to do a bit whilst on holiday from his day job.

Next week sees the 1s entertain Harpenden who have comfortably made the mid-table in their first season in the division. They will prove harder, far harder to beat than when we played them in late June where we were lucky enough to bowl them out for just 47 in 22 and a bit overs. We now have to win and hope Welwyn slip up and considering they still have to play West Herts and Stevenage then we must believe they could very much do so. If Welwyn win the three remaining matches then we have to tip our hats to them but we have to keep believing. More importantly we need to go out and play positive cricket – wins are the be all and end all of the season now.

Sunday sees the 1s in County Cup action as they attempt to get the game on with Knebworth Park after Sunday's complete wash-out. Unfortunately, this means that the Presidents XI match has had to sadly fall by the wayside, more details of that will be in the news section later. The match is vital and we will have to be at our very best as Knebworth still have a fighting chance of re-joining the HCPL Division 2 East next season. There will be a large crowd all being well, boosted by the Presidents invited guests to hopefully cheer the boys onto the final at Shenley on September 10.

The 2s next week travel to one-time big boys Watford. Greg's men should be boosted by 2 players, dependant on selection and availability. A win will see the boys leapfrog Watford who cannot get promotion despite having a good season.

The 3s entertain mid-table Ware who still have a sneaky chance of Division 5 cricket next season and the 4s travel to Offley & Stopsley who have so far gone through the season unbeaten which is one hell of an achievement. The boys need a maximum of 57 points from their last three matches to guarantee promotion.

So hopefully the sun will shine in Potters Bar this weekend.

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

Regards  
Fred