

Potters Bar U11 v Finchley U11 at Dame Alice Owens School – Friday 6th June

At long last it was third time lucky for this fixture. Thanks firstly go to the Middlesex Colts Association for allowing us a week longer to play this game –the number of the bonus ball in the National Lottery on Saturday would have determined the result had weather affected us again and this would have meant a Finchley win as the number was even!!

But we managed to get a game in with the darkest of clouds ominously close and the M25 rush hour traffic at a stand still even closer. Finchley won the toss and elected to field and we were under the kosh from the first ball. Finchley bowled excellently on a slow, damp pitch (unsurprisingly) and Joseph Emmanuel (Middx U10) showed why he is one for the future with a splendid opening spell. Alexander, promoted up the order, perished first and the ever-reliable Luke soon followed. Harrison and Pat Scott – the 2 strongest batters in the side were then at the crease. After a few more overs of seam the Finchley captain turned to spin and Harry, who had previously bowled pretty quickly against us in the league match, proceeded to bowl some of the best leg spin I have seen at this age group – perfect flight, good length and a huge amount of turn. Other than 2 excellent sweep shots there was hardly a scoring run against him. He managed to sneak one past Harrison and with it the real chances of us posting a big score. Pat soon followed as did Freddie and then it was left to James and Hadley to try and gain some respectability to the score. I asked the batsmen to get us to 70 as this would prove a competitive score and the partnership of 35 almost did that. James was bowled by his younger County colleague, Joseph, trying to hit out in the last 3 overs for 11 and it was Hadley, who improves with every match, who finished unbeaten on 16.

So a score of 62 was posted which had one of the Finchley parents rubbing his hands with glee at the prospect of an ‘easy’ win – overheard by a few of the PB mums!! But this Potters Bar side doesn’t know when they are beaten. I asked for total commitment and warned the boys that not everyone would bowl – not everyone did bowl but everyone gave 100% and they stuck together through every run scored and extra given away.

Finchley themselves had a plan though. One of their tail end batters performed well against us in the league match and he was promoted up the order to try and blunt the incisive partnership of Illott and Scott. And in their defence it worked, Joseph remained unbeaten and although the score wasn’t up with the lowly run rate required, no wickets had fallen. After the opening bowlers were rested for the final onslaught nearer the end, Luke and Hadley took up the mantle – both extremely economical in their own right. Then came Finchley’s master plan! They retired the unlucky opener who scored a dogged 7 not out to replace him with a normally higher order batter. But PB had other plans – a big slog at Hadley saw the ball sail towards and possibly over Drew’s head. There is nothing in the laws of the game that stop a fielder from moving but Drew thought he’d do just this and opted for the more difficult option of taking the steeping catch one handed than moving back 2 yards to swallow a simplish chance! The catch was held, the crowd went wild and the umpire (me) lost a few hairs and gained a few grey ones!!

1 wicket down (theoretically 2 because of the retirement) and then Alexander came to the party forcing the batsman to drive upishly where the safe hands of James was waiting and he too, made a simple catch look spectacular with a few rolls on the ground (football has a lot to answer for!). 3 down the Finchley batters starting to panic as they were now well behind the rate.

4 overs remained and James and Pat each had 2 overs left so I had no option but to finish with them in the gloomy, chilly evening. Potters Bar then had their own master plan – the Middx all rounder, Joseph was still at the crease and Freddie, the acting captain in Timmy's absence, decided (with a little prompt) to set a very deep field to protect the boundary but give Joe the single so James and Pat could bowl at the new batsman. This worked a treat with James and Pat picking up 2 wickets each in the first 3 of the remaining overs. The penultimate over saw Finchley needing 12 to win and James bowled an excellent over conceding just 3 runs and picking up one of the wickets mentioned earlier.

So then, 9 to win and wides & no-balls to count as an extra ball. Pat, who had bowled so beautifully for three overs then decided to hurl one down the leg side at head height and what seemed like a certain 4 wides (6 scored and 3 to win off 4) but Harrison Palmer, keeping wicket, somehow managed to get enough of a paw onto the ball to parry it off for a single and only 3 scored. Then the killer blow, a single to Joe brought the number 9 to face and he was visibly nervous; Pat bowled the perfect delivery – full and straight. It got through the young batters defences and struck the stumps. 6 off the last ball then would have meant a tie and even though they scored a 4 they were never really going to win unless Pat bowled another extra.

So through to the semi final for the region and a win against Islington should see us playing Winchmore Hill again in the final. **Should** we beat Islington then it will be in both clubs interest to pick a date where all the County boys are available – let's hope we continue in the same vein.

The result against Finchley was a truly excellent one – it seems that every one is working together and they are all starting to think cricket. I always remind the players that I want them to think how they can help the team every single ball in the field – if they do this they will always be concentrating and always backing up, helping the thrower in a 'relay' throw or taking the stumps at the bowlers end. Long may the success continue – not necessarily the results as I judge success in many ways.

Thanks to my Father in Law for scoring in the absence of Jon Scutt-Frindall who opted to play golf rather than watch the boys win a quarterfinal, what do you expect from an Arsenal supporter!!

Potters Bar – 62-7
Finchley 60-8

Notable performances:
Harrison – 20
Hadley – 16*
James – 11

Pat – 3-11 off 4
James – 2-5 off 4
Alexander 1-4 off 2.