

Bricklayer's Arms v Gentlemen of West London

Sunday 25 August, Abbey RG. Gents won toss. Sunny, 33C

Won by 77 runs

Gentlemen of West London			Bricklayer's Arms				
Kumar		b Basnet	68	*Tremain	b Oruganti	8	
A. Ahmed	c Locke	b Thapa	6	Sturm	run out (Puli)	1	
Namilikonda	not out		109	Poonwasie	st Sudireddy	b Khan	38
Kota	c Sturm	b Poonwasie	20	Thapa	not out		72
†Sudireddy		b Poonwasie	19	Ottley		b Khan	0
Chatharaju	c Sturm	b Goymer	4	Basnet		b Dubey	32
Puli		b Poonwasie	5	Goymer	not out		1
Khan		not out	5	Sukul, Hamilton and †Locke	dnb		
Oruganti, Dubey and *S. Patel	dnb						
Extras	b6 w3 nb2		11	Extras	b7 w7 nb4		18
Total	6 wickets	35 overs	247	Total	5 wickets	35 overs	170
FoW: 15, 132, 171, 213, 220, 229				FoW: 13, 15, 79, 86, 169			
Bowling: Thapa 7-1-39-1, Ottley 3-0-21-0, Goymer 7-0-39-1, Basnet 7-0-38-1, Sukul 3-0-26-0, Hamilton 2-0-20-0, Poonwasie 5-0-36-3, Tremain 1-0-12-0				Bowling: Dubey 6-1-18-1, Oruganti 5-2-12-1, Chatharaju 3-0-24-0, Khan 7-2-19-2, Kota 7-0-35-0, Kumar 4-0-16-0, S. Patel 2-0-22-0, Namilikonda 1-0-17-0			



Powerhouse batting by Namilikonda (a first club century in 32 overs, with 19 fours) and Kumar (13 fours) put the game beyond Brick with a stand of 117, the season's highest, in 18 overs. The hosts' response would have won many games, but they fell short, if never looking like being dismissed.

They enjoyed little luck, suffering the late withdrawal of all-rounder Waqas Mohammed with an injured hand and losing a decisive toss on a hot day. For the Gents Anil Oruganti, weekending from Coventry, replaced Hemin Patel for his first game since 2016.

There was drama before the game when a Gents player fainted after suffering heatstroke. He recovered after rehydrating in the shade and played the whole game. It was wrong that this incident was not reported at the time to the captain and the Gents must learn from this. Any illness on match day must be reported to him and the club first aider, Nilesh Dubey, who had strolled out to umpire when the incident occurred. Wisdom did prevail though when drinks breaks were agreed every 12 overs.

Patel batted without hesitation. Poor Ahmed nicked behind in the third over whereupon Kumar and Namilikonda batted with resolution. The odd ball beat the bat and there were a few chances late in the innings but fours came in more overs than not, racing over the fast outfield. The London Borough of Merton pitch contractors cannot have been bowlers in their time. Students of quirkiness would have found much to admire in the score board numbers, which each summed to nine instead of the more common 0/1, 2/3, etc.

Kumar was bowled in the 21st over, his most attacking of the season and a knock of vibrant power. Namilikonda was then happy to play second fiddle to Kota and Sudireddy before going to his hundred in the 33rd, a splendid achievement. One had sympathy for the toiling bowlers, of whom the spinner Poonwasie was the pick, and the fielders, who stood up well. Brick's impressive young captain Tremain showed leadership, but 248 to win was an onerous challenge.

Brick cater for the inner man and the melon slices and Ottley's garden plums were a Godsend to wash down the cheese sandwiches and cakes. The Gents had used up all the orange squash in preparing the first innings drinks, for which they copped a brisk tea-time wiggling from home caterer and former captain Watson, which he reprised several times.

Brick went in to bat at ten past five. The finish was likely to be late. Gents had two early successes when Oruganti, bowling at a sharp pace, castled Tremain and Sturm, having been sent back by Poonwasie, was run out by a sharp throw into Sudireddy by mid off Puli, smart work all round. Poonwasie, Thapa and Basnet batted well but needed to score a nine an over for the last 27, an unenviable task.

They batted well, so Khan should be pleased with his two wickets and Dubey his singleton, which came during an over of experimental off breaks. The captain, who has enjoyed better bowling summers, was without a wicket. Meanwhile drama was unfolding at Headingley. The tension was high, so credit goes to both scorers for producing an accurate record in spite of this distraction. A good day ended with Namilikonda generously treating both sides in Brick's excellent retro local pub, the Trafalgar.

Such hot days send the BBC newsreaders spiralling down into a vortex of numskull reportage. We were told on the late evening news that it was the hottest late summer Bank Holiday Sunday "since records began" by which they mean 1914 when calibration became standardised. Over a long run of data, one would expect the average temperature on 24 August, the earliest Sunday it can be, to be higher than the 25th, which would be higher than the average on the 26th to the 30th. The August Bank Holiday was only moved from the first Monday in the month to the last in 1965. They don't tell you that, do they? The hottest Sunday between 24 and 30 August in 43 years is less worthy of note, somehow. Fools.

Brick's report

A game eclipsed by what happened at Headingley. We were in the field, with 33C heat, so frequent drinks breaks. The news varied at each, but then the square leg umpire brought out his phone. As we took wickets everyone almost ignored the bowler as we rushed to find the latest. Finally a roar from the boundary announced the win but it was only on finding highlights tonight I realised how close we had come to losing at the death. Amazing. We lost our match but nobody cared.

Frankly this was never a game we were going to win once Waqas decided to WhatsApp a picture of a hurt hand to a gardening Mike Ottley rather than text me as per standing instructions. Had he done so Anil and Tara could have brought a replacement. Learn from this, people.

We were unexpectedly ten and minus a valuable bowler and batsman. The Gents, whom we have never beaten, unsurprisingly chose to bat on a blazing day, though they did very sportingly lend us a sub fielder throughout.

We did begin well. In the third over Tara Thapa induced a thin low nick to Chris Locke – 15/1. Alas Mike Ottley's three overs went for 21, while Rob Goymer and Tara also suffered as the score hit 55 off 10 overs and 132 off 20. Only Anil Basnet introduced a measure of control, and on the same score in the 21st over got his reward by bowling the surviving opener. But at the other end Maurice Sukul suffered while Mark Hamilton's tempting leggies induced uppish mishits that failed to find a fielder.

Anil ended his spell with unjust figures of 1-38 and a handshake from Gents' best batsman, Namilikonda who was on his way to a fine century. But Lal Poonwasie's loosener was well held at short midwicket by Tim Sturm on 171, and at 213 he claimed a second wicket as Sudireddy was bowled through the Gents' favourite pull shot. The returning Rob Goymer had Chatharaju again well taken by Tim, this time at long on at 220, and Lal got his third victim bowled on 229. But Namilikonda got his ton having given only one hard chance to long on, and survived a skier back to Tara to post 109 not out and set us 248 to win.

It looked a tough target but at least not the 300 we had feared at one point. Skipper Greg Tremain and Tim Sturm started our reply, but the bowling was tight and in the sixth over Greg on 8 was beaten through the gate trying an offside drive against one that came in on him. That was 14/1 but worse followed two overs later as Tim Sturm called for a single to mid off only to find Lal unmoved as non-striker. Tim's run out for 1 left us 15/2.

Lal did atone, hitting a classy 38 off 40 balls as he and Tara Thapa put on 64 before Lal was stumped by a quick-thinking keeper who beat his slow turn back to the crease. We were 79/3 in the 20th, which became 86/4 in the 22nd as Mike Ottley was bowled for a duck. Tara Thapa and Anil Basnet set briskly about chasing a by now impossible 13 an over, nigh on doubling our score as Tara reached a well-deserved fifty in 48 balls and ended with 72 not out (63), while Anil was out in the final over for 32 (37).