

THE ARCHIVE

CLASSIC GENTS MATCHES

West XI v Gentlemen of West London

Sunday 11 July 2010, LMPF Greenford. Gents won toss. Sunny, 27C

Won by 12 runs

Gentlemen of West London		West XI	
Khan		7	†Bapu
*Gilkes	c R. Allerton	4	Boden
S. Desai	lbw	4	*Dane
Rudru	c Taylor	26	R. Aylott
Iqbal		2	T. Aylott
S. Patel		35	Taylor
†H. Desai		3	R. Allerton
Newcombe		11	Wright
H. Patel		2	Cattee
Buck	c Dane	12	Delanian
Snelling		7	Laing
Toft	not out	2	Hill
Extras		17	Extras
Total	All out	32.1 overs	Total
FoW: 7, 11, 24, 30, 58, 66, 103, 106, 112, 121, 132		FoW: 17, 19, 24, 26, 93, 103, 113, 119, 119, 119, 120	
Bowling: Taylor 7-2-19-1, Boden 4-0-18-3, Dane 4-0-24-0, Wright 7-1-22-4, Laing 2-0-14-0, Hill 6-0-24-2, Cattee 2.1-0-5-1		Bowling: Iqbal 7-1-16-3, Rudru 7-1-16-2, S. Patel 7-1-25-1, Snelling 3-0-19-0, Khan 2-0-15-0, H. Patel 6.5-1-17-5, Buck 1-0-10-0	

In a classic game played in broiling heat, the Gents produced an inspired team performance to reverse the recent run of defeats and retain the Bob Ashton Memorial Cup. Chasing a hard-earned 133 to win, West XI seemed in control at 93-4 but a mad tumble of wickets inspired by brilliant fielding and catching saw them fall short by 12 runs, the final four wickets falling for one. Hemin Patel produced a personal best bowling return, his quintet of victims including the empurpled trio of Dane, who struck his sixth fifty in this series, Taylor and Rowan Allerton. Rudru and Iqbal also bowled superbly and a series of wonderful catches stuck. A redemptive effort in West XI's innings was needed, as once again the Gents' batting was inconsistent, the exceptions being Rudru and Sanjay Patel plus some intelligent, steely batting by the tail.

The Gents showed only two changes from the dream team that regained the trophy in July 2009, Buck and Newcombe coming in for Inkollu and Sciberras. West XI, in contrast to that fixture, when Bapu, Dane and Allerton were absent, were able to put out almost their strongest possible team, lacking only Neepam Bhatt. Events proved that at their strongest the sides are evenly matched.

Gilkes successfully called tails and though torn on the matter decided to bat, 35 overs a side and a new ball for each innings. Boden ripped out the top three of Gilkes, Khan and Sachin Desai in short order before Iqbal played over Taylor, bowled through and setting his usual challenges. Rudru and Sanjay Patel settled the innings down before Rudru was well caught by a diving short extra-cover. Shu Desai came and went but this side batted deep and Newcombe batted solidly for ten overs as Patel played the bowling with confidence before Wright had him, one of four. He would return the compliment later in the afternoon.

Hemin Patel was bowled Hill, but after Newcombe's dismissal senior professionals Buck, Snelling and Toft batted well and took the Gents up to a score that was below par but still competitive on a dustbowl wicket that helped the bowlers.

Since West XI's fifth wicket comprised 67 of the 120 runs scored, there were by definition two periods in which ball was dominant over bat. The first of these was the blistering opening spell from Iqbal, though the slower Rudru matched him for guile. The spectacular caught and bowled of previous week's centurion Boden started the early jollity, Bapu following bowled Rudru before the hostile Iqbal cleaned up the Aylotts. Dane's marathon 25-over vigil was worthy of the highest praise and with Taylor his usual defiant self the pair played Sanjay Patel, Snelling and Khan with dogged concentration and no little skill.

Those whose memories go back to July 2008 will remember an almost identical scenario, Gents, having been 61-2 in the 18th. over, falling two runs short of West XI's 127. So unlikely did a Gents' win seem during the later stages of the stand between Dane and Taylor that the secretary composed a never to be sent text message giving news of the defeat, hurried rewriting being needed (no easy matter on a Sony Ericsson with tiny keys). There may have been an element of superstition in this but few experienced observers would have bet on the Gents at this point.

The retirement of Snelling with a pulled muscle set Gilkes further challenges, to which he rose with a smile on his face. "Two wickets and we're back in this" murmured the injured man a few minutes before that very thing happened.

No heads were dropping and the introduction of Hemin Patel in the 22nd. over changed the match. A diving Newcombe caught Taylor at short extra-cover four overs later and in the 28th. Allerton drove to long-off. West XI were still favourites with Dane and Wright at the crease but an agile Shu Desai stumping (the first time Hemin Patel had taken Dane's wicket) saw off the captain. The rest of the wickets then fell with alacrity. Sanjay Patel bowled Wright to whoops of delight before Cattie was deceived in the flight and bowled. Iqbal took a high catch running back to see off Delanian in Rudru's final over and West XI, like Gents batting 12, were 119-10 off 33 overs. Dave Laing then became Hemin's fifth victim, lofting to mid-off, and The Gents had won in a frenzy of excitement. Commiserations are given to the sporting West XI boys who came so close.

Greg Newcombe later described the game as the best he had ever played in. Few Gents present would disagree.