

THE ARCHIVE

CLASSIC GENTS MATCHES



Coming a week after a faultless, convincing win against West XI the Gents were tested to the limit here, but thanks to Ken Toft and a crook Sanjay Patel just edged a remarkable win. The game had everything – a late, decisive turnaround, some appalling Gents fielding, a spot of revenge by Hemin Patel after his first two balls went for six, a lunatic spectator and a then record stand for the tenth wicket. This record lasted until Sanjay again, this time with Raja Pentakota, put on an unbeaten 79 against Salix in 2012. The clubs would meet only once more, Grumblers having become a bit sniffy about the venue and unwilling to organise pitches for themselves.

Gentlemen of West London v. Old Grumblers

Sunday 6 June 2009, Fairfield RG. Old grumblers won toss. Showery, 19C

Old Grumblers			Gentlemen of West London				
Hull		b S. Patel	44	Khan	c and b	b Sidall	4
Masterson		b S. Patel	16	Sciberras	c Bagnall	b Joiner	20
Sidall	c H. Desai	b Snelling	9	Inkollu	c Rough	b Sidall	0
†Rough	not out		30	Gilkes	c Hull	b Sidall	7
James	run out		16	Lalam		b Bagnall	14
Lee		b Sciberras	0	Wahed		b Santos	26
Bell	run out		1	†H. Desai		b Flannery	4
Flannery	c Gilkes	b Sciberras	0	H. Patel		b Bagnall	18
Bagnall	not out		19	Snelling	c Rough	b Santos	0
*Joiner	did not bat		0	Toft	not out		28
Santos	did not bat			*S. Patel	not out		24
Extras		lb1 w21	22	Extras		b9 lb1 w6	16
Total	7 wickets	35 overs	157	Total	9 wickets	34.1 overs	161
FoW: 45, 72, 88, 119, 121, 124, 124			FoW: 18, 18, 34, 36, 68, 78, 101, 104, 104				
Bowling: Snelling 7-0-22-1, Khan 7-1-20-0, Lalam 5-0-17-0, S. Patel 8-0-32-2, H. Patel 3-0-31-0, Sciberras 3-0-19-2, Inkollu 2-0-15-0			Bowling: Sidall 7-2-11-3, Santos 7-0-46-2, Joiner 5.1-0-12-1, Bell 4-0-29-0, Bagnall 7-1-22-2, Flannery 2-0-15-1, Hull 2-0-16-0				

This writer has seen great valour on a cricket field but nothing comes close to the sheer physical courage shown by Sanjay Patel who, in great pain with a torn calf muscle and barely able to hobble, came out to bat with runner Shu Desai with the Gents 104-9 and contemplating a dignified but comprehensive defeat. At the other end was Ken Toft, with only one innings (1 not out) to his name in 2009. A stunning tenth-wicket record stand in Gents matches of 57 in 10.1 overs then gained the hosts the most unlikely of victories with five balls to spare. Ken Toft, whose 28 (five fours) was his highest club score, described the win as his 'proudest cricketing experience' and his captain as a hero. He also amusingly remarked that the innings had cemented his position at No.10. The stand eclipsed the winning 51, also unbeaten, set in 2002 by Sanjay and Phil Hill against 12 Angry Men.

The first whiff of grapeshot, a Patel pull for four off his first ball, had Joiner setting deep fields, which were brought in for Toft. Based on videos of his previous innings, this was right. But whereas the immaculate forward defensive has remained intact, Toft added a new dimension to his game in the nets, the pull for four to bring the scores level being the best shot one can remember seeing from the tough Lancastrian.

The final 45 minutes were in contrast to much of what had got before, with the Gents generally outplayed over the day by a feisty, talented side who stepped in when their original oppo, Sunderland SC, could not raise a team and Gents were blown out by London Rams. The Gents were profligate with wides, sound spells from the openers followed by too many wayward deliveries. Young Hemin Patel's first two balls were carted for six by Hull. A skier and a top edge slash were caught but six catches dropped and two smart run outs barely compensated for the comedy misfields, including several fours being let through fielders' legs and a ludicrous all-run five.

A particularly splendid species of parklife walking by had insulted Toft after a dropped catch (before demanding that Sciberras be No balled for throwing). One wonders just how low Toft felt at that moment. Hull, Rough (known to GWLCC as a Sunderland player) and Bagnall led some attractive Grumblers batting. Only five wickets fell to the bowlers, two to Sciberras, whose analysis after one over was 1-0-8-2.

Sciberras alone of the top four batsmen distinguished himself, though Inkollu was undone by a stunning away swinger, grabbed by Rough who had to twist to his right to take an excellent low catch. Lalam began promisingly before a wild yahoo, but the returning Wahed anchored the innings impressively for 14.3 overs, surviving the fall of Desai, the violent Hemin Patel, who, annoyed at his own bowling and seeking revenge, bludgeoned 14 off Flannery's second over and Snelling, caught off a top edge. When Wahed fell off the very next ball from Santos, the game looked over.

Even two days after the win, the ensuing events barely seem credible. Naveed Khan assessed Old Grumblers correctly; 'The oppo were fantastic. Genuinely good cricketers who on balance deserved to win but took the defeat with great grace. I reckon they would be a great addition to our fixture schedule for future years.' They certainly behaved with more dignity than did the Gents when they lost in similar circumstances, to Urban Associates, in 1996.