**Match Report:**

Round 3

Panania/East Hills CC (W’wood)

2 Day match at Flockhart Park

**Won Outright (an innings and 36 runs)**

The coin change didn’t work! Rangers have still not won a toss. But again, our opposition chose to bat.

The youngsters were at it again from the start. Carl and Ethan bothered their openers from ball one. Ethan was desperately unlucky with a shocking not-out call from an LBW shout in his first over. One problem in the lower grades is ‘umpires’ who can’t umpire. This one was as plumb as they come! The ensuing pressure from the field probably worked in our favour then when Carl struck the back leg from the other end; probably going down leg, the appeal drew another incorrect decision from the same umpire – this time in our favour though. Carl’s inswingers caused their top order all manner of problems while Ethan toiled at the other end finally striking in his fourth over getting an inside edge onto the stumps. Carl struck again in his fifth over rattling the stumps and then again in his sixth over with another genuine LBW. 3 for 3 of 6. Ethan ended his age-forced spell when another played-on to his stumps. Finishing with 2 for 20 off his 6. Carl continued, clean bowling another, eventually finishing his spell of 8 with figures of 4 for 8 including 2 maidens.

Atif got a maiden in before drinks. Panania 6 for 26 at the break.

Bowling at the stumps is the best way for Atif to get wickets. His pace is too much for most. The ball is past them before they can play a shot. And this was evident twice in his spell of 8. Two clean-bowled, along with a skied chance to Nico at Cover, making good ground for a well-judged catch. Some great tactics showing there is more than one way to ‘skin a cat’. A mistimed pull/hook off the splice.

Sajid replaced Carl at the Pavilion End and swung the ball both ways and was unlucky not to pick up an edge or two. 0 for 14 off his 5 overs before a returning Ali finished off PEH drawing an edge from around the wicket to a diving Neil behind the stumps. Wasim and Jamshed can count themselves unlucky not to get some overs; our strike bowlers had done the work for them.

Small chases can often be dangerous. Batsmen need to be patient, to not force runs. Runs will come. They always do. But chasing small totals has brought many teams undone. Trust me – I know!

Nico and Riz personified this patience; taking only 16 off the first 8 overs, and making our opposition more vocal than they had the right to be. But all that did was raise the tempo for our openers. We passed the total in the 23rd over. Batting on ‘til stumps our openers had shared a partnership of 98, Nico unbeaten on 41, Riz on 49.

As a Captain, you are wary that the decisions you make have more than one affect. After much to-ing and fro-ing during the week, seeking opinions from some, and taking into account player’s availability, it was decided we would bat on. For about an hour – the first session.

Riz picked up the single he needed for his 50 and departed shortly afterwards - skying a ball mid-wicket.

Having spoken to the team prior to the start of play, and explaining the game plan and what we hoped to achieve, the Skipper changed the batting order in favour of some bigger hitting and elevated Atif to Number 3. A quick-fire 24 ensued, all while Nico continued past his 50 and onwards. After Atif fell to another skied catch, Carl joined Nico who had advanced to 83. Running short of time and overs, the message was clear. Nico had 17 runs to get, and Carl had to support him with strike, singles, and turning ones into quick twos. Some fantastic stroke play coupled with some simply big hitting found us with one ball remaining in the session. On 98, Nico guided the ball behind point for 2. Session complete. A great knock from Nico that has been coming for a while.

After a quick audit of the scorebook, we declared at the break on 2 for 191 – a lead of 117.

Carl and Ethan again opened the second innings bowling. Carl’s usual swing eluded him for the first over or two. In his first over Ethan managed to get one of their openers to play-on in somewhat unusual fashion – a leg-side ‘leave’ turned into an outside/inside edge that took leg stump. 6 miserly overs ensued and he finished his spell with 1 for 5.

Atif replaced Ethan at the far end and soon found the line. His pace is just too quick, and while patient batsmen will leave outside off stump all day, those on the stumps are virtually unplayable. The first one broke a bail, and the second one sent the middle stump flying. He tired soon after though, and finished a 7 over spell with 3 for 20, helped by Ethan snaring a great low catch at second slip. Match figures of 6 for 42.

Carl, meanwhile, produced his inswingers quickly and after being convinced to remain at the same end picked up 2 wickets in his 6th over finishing with 2 for 13 off 7 – 6 for 21 for the match. A catch by Sajid at cover before nabbing the opposition ‘Captain’ (and I use that term loosely) LBW for the second time in the match! He was replaced by the reliable Sajid and after starting with a maiden, his 4 overs ended with figures of 0 for 14.

Changing things up a little, our Captain threw the ball to Aiden. Hoping to make things happen in the face of a dull afternoon with an uninterested and clearly out of their depth opposition. Aiden clean bowled one in his third over and finished with excellent figures of 1 for 6. Ali also chimed in with 3 overs for 5 runs. Ethan came back for what turned out to be a single over whilst Wasim took up the challenge. His first two overs went for only 1 run, but his third proved more fruitful. A stifled LBW shout drew a dubious ‘out’ from some poor umpiring, and what proved to be the last ball of the match two balls later drew a sharp one-handed catch from Ethan at a rather short cover. An outright victory sealed.

I have purposely not focused on the poor umpiring and sportsmanship in this match. I don’t want to take the gloss of a fantastic performance, and a wonderful victory. But a superb direct-hit run out from Sajid at cover, and a spectacular one handed screamer from Ethan at second slip off Atif should have featured in this report too.

We have sent a statement to the rest of the division.