**Match Report:**

Round 6

St. Christophers CC

2 Day match at Flockhart Park

**Lost by 5 runs**

Four maidens in a row. Carl’s first two, and Ethan’s first two. We lost the toss and were asked to field. Not what we wanted to do losing Nico for Day 2 and Asif and Riz early on Day 1. But our youngsters toiled away and we had some early success. Carl trapped their Captain in front LBW for a duck. Two overs later, Ethan, operating as usual from the far end, snagged an inside edge onto the stumps of the other opener. 2 for 19 off 8.

The boys finished their opening spells soon after, and the first and second change bowlers came to the fore. Sajid struck in his second over drawing an edge from a wide one which was chased by a dangerous looking batsman; taken safely behind by Neil ending a partnership of 37. And Atif had the ball pounding into our keeper’s gloves as he bowled with searing pace. A bottom edge taken low down again by Neil; soon followed by a regulation outside edge ending the innings of their Number 3. Sajid got back in on the act with the help of Aiden making good ground to take a well judged catch off a top edge at Square-Leg. 6 for 71.

And that’s where it all went pear-shaped. Having lost Asif and Riz at the main break, the gaps in the field were exploited and a partnership of 68 ensued. Ali struggled to find his rhythm – 0 for 13 off his 3. Aiden bowled well bowling 6 straight for figures of 0 for 20, but the missing fielders and the light drizzle combined to create a frustrating session.

Carl and Ethan resumed the attack, and both struggled to come to grips (pun intended) with the wet ball. Carl put in some extra pace but couldn’t find the swing he usually can. And Ethan’s line and length eluded him. The latter did however, break the partnership finally in the 46th over hitting the top of middle. But the damage had been done. We had them at 6 for 71 off 23, and the next 23 cost us a wicketless 65 runs. Not that big a deal normally, but in the context of this match, somewhat disappointing. That wicket though, proved the catalyst, and we set about our task once again.

Atif and Sajid rejoined the attack, and it was Atif who would see the innings close soon after. An LBW appeal was approved and the very next ball their last batsman had his leg bail airborne. St. Christophers all out for 168. About 40 or 50 runs more than expected given the start we had.

This will test us Day 2. We need to bat sensibly but aggressively to put our stamp on this one. Depending results elsewhere, we are at risk of relinquishing our position on top.

Neil covered for Nico at the top of the order, and he and Riz got off to a solid start. Sensible and patient batting saw the openers on 61 at the first break. Neil gloved one behind a couple of overs after the restart, and a returning Asif at three departed the very next ball. Aiden found himself elevated to 4 he joined Riz to consolidate and push on. A great partnership ensued, making it to the main break at 2 for 92.

4 overs afterwards, though, Riz played a pull-shot to one that stayed low and lost his off stump. Another solid innings from this season’s top scorer, 71. Atif, unable to contain his enthusiasm, put together a quickfire 18 before falling to an almost identical delivery. Sajid at 6 copped an LBW to another one that stayed low and all of a sudden things were looking a little shaky. Ross joined his son at 7, 5 for 160. And now things went pear-shaped again. Needing only 9 runs to win, Ross mis-timed one to Mid-off; Carl was trapped LBW; as was Wasim; as was Ethan. Batting one short, we’d lost 4 for 3, with 3 in 3 balls. Aiden stranded at the other end on 22 – a very well put together innings, and his best for Rangers so far. But we’d gifted St. Christophers a win, the bowler a hat-trick, and Panania/East Hills top spot.

To try and salvage something we sent them back in in pursuit of a bonus point or two. We had time for 7 overs, 1 each from Ethan, Atif and Sajid. Sajid nabbed one. While at the other end Carl took a wicket each in his first two, then two in his third; finishing with 4 for 18. 5 for 39 gave us 1 bonus point to at least get something out of the mess.

A very disappointing result from a very winnable position. We have a 2 day match against the ladder leaders next. There’s still over half of the season to go, but we need to regroup. We’re missing players here and there, and this doesn’t help with consistency. We can put this right, and we need to.