

Kelawar C.C. Vs Junoon C.C. at Alice Smith School – 4<sup>th</sup> April 2009

Phil and I arrived at the ground at about 10 a.m. to be greeted by the rather worrying sight of the opposition, Junoon C.C., already changed and going through a range of professional looking pre-match stretching exercises. A sprinkling of Kelawar team-mates were sitting in the stand discussing the Friday evening drinking activities, whilst captain Mike Speed stood pensively in the middle surveying the puddles in the region of the bowler's run ups and the swamp at extra cover.

After a couple of consultations it was agreed to 'give it a go', with an immediate start and a game reduced to 25 overs a side. The Kelawar team, by now a complete 11, hastily changed into their sports attire and prepared for battle.

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Mike won the toss and, possibly influenced by the rain clouds looming on the horizon, elected to bat. Noel and Vignesh were given the nod to open up, and proceeded to sedately move the score along, ably assisted by wides, to 29 of the first 5 overs. Things took a turn for the worse in the sixth over when after a bit of a mix up, (or rather some pretty poor calling from the non-striker), Vignesh set off for a quick single to fine leg only to be sent back and turn to see the keeper pick up the ball and hit the stumps with a direct throw. (30-1, Vignesh 9).

This brought Dil to the crease, who immediately announced his intentions with a nice square cut to deep cover point off the first ball for 1. With 2 further classic square cuts for 4 from Dil and a nice 6 over square leg from Noel the score advanced to 67-1 at the 10 over drinks break. Things were looking good!

Things were not looking so good 2 balls after the restart when Dil, stepping back to play his trademark square cut, found the ball a bit too straight and only succeeded in lobbing it gently to short mid off. (67-2, Dil 13).

Naveen was next in and was soon unlucky with a cracking straight drive which landed in a puddle for 1 run. Noel, otherwise quiet, managed to hit a couple of 6s off one over of medium pace, and with the scoreboard ticking along nicely the scene was set for a burst of acceleration in the final 10 overs and a score in the region of 170-180. However, Junoon had other ideas and the introduction of the spinners saw a bit of a break put on the flow of runs, and wickets starting to tumble.

Naveen departed at 111 in the 17<sup>th</sup> over trapped LBW in front for 8, Padma then came in and hit a brisk 14 with two 4s before being bowled (133-4 off 20.5). Newcomer Dan at no. 6 proceeded to run himself out going for a quick bye when the keeper dropper the ball only to see the said keeper pick up the ball and again hit the stumps with a direct throw (139-5, Dan 1).

Noel was next to go for 51, niftily stumped advancing down the track to a wide-ish delivery (140-6 off 22.2). Anu holed out in the deep for 3 attempting to push up the scoring rate (144-7). Newcomer Sam (newcomer Dan's brother) was then bowled for 1 (145-8). The Speed family (old Mike and young Chris) combined to pushed the score past 150 with Chris being caught off the last ball of the innings for 2. Mike ended up with 5 not out (one 4) and Phil Render, in his customary position of no. 11, 'Did Not Bat'.

The final score was 153-9 off the allotted 25 overs, wides coming in with a commendable 38. A little disappointing after the promising start but nevertheless a challenging target for Junoon.

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Phil and I shared a satisfying lunch of chicken sandwiches and oranges (courtesy of Phil's wife Agnes), whilst watching the Junoon squad tucking into an enormous pot of fried rice with a number of tasty looking condiments on the side. We then made our way down the pavilion steps to join the customary motivational team talk... something along the lines of, "if we don't bowl any wides, cut off the singles, and take our catches the game's in the bag!"

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After a bit of a panic when we realized that nobody had brought along a new ball, Mike opened up with an interesting combination of speed (Anu) and spin (Dil), (using a pretty decent old ball dug out of the depths of the team kit bag).

Anu was unlucky to see a sharp chance put down by Phil at slip in his first over, (so much for the motivational team talk!). The tempo picked up in Dil's first over with the third ball sailing over the mid wicket boundary for a big 6. The following ball, batsman Arafat, no doubt his confidence sky high, attempted a quick single to square leg only to see Dan pounce like a tiger, deliver a perfect throw to Dil at the bowler's end and run him out by a couple of yards. (Junoon 10-1).

With some good tight bowling from Anu, Dil, and first change Chris Speed, the score moved along slowly, until, in the 10<sup>th</sup> over, Dil took a comfortable caught and bowled to remove Awais (Junoon 43-2).

No. 4, Nawaz, did not last long, clean bowled by Chris for 2; then in the 13<sup>th</sup> over, Moshin skied a top edge, young Chris Speed bravely claiming a caught and bowled when at least three of his more experienced team mates could have easily got under the ball! Drinks were taken, and with Junoon 55-4 off 12.2 things were looking good!

Things were not looking so good 2 balls after the restart with new batsman, Shamen, proceeding to smite a four over square leg, the ball landing just in front of the ropes, followed by a big 6 over mid wicket. The next ball was a wide, then Shamen survived a very confident LBW appeal from Chris moving inside looking for another big leg side shot. (Chris being spotted exchanging a few pleasantries with the umpire at the end of the over!)

Shamen then set about Phil (having replaced Dil at the car park end) taking 13 off the next over, Phil being unlucky to see a chance go begging at deep mid on (Chris Speed). Anu was reintroduced into the attack to stop the rot and succeeded in slowing the run rate but couldn't make the crucial breakthrough. He was, however, again unlucky to see another chance put down off Shamen at deep mid wicket (Chris again ☹), Phil at short third man just getting his finger tips to a juicy thick edge, and then to see Shamen survive another confident appeal, this time for a stumping by Dil, (who by now had donned the keeper's pads), standing up (!) and neatly removing the bails. Shamen finally went, caught by Noel at deep square leg off Phil for 38 going for another big hit.

The score had now moved on to 99, and with 55 required off 7.5 overs we felt the game was there for the taking. However we had failed to take into account no. 7, Omar, who after studiously prodding at a couple of balls from Phil, proceeded to let loose and take 21 off poor Chris Speed's final over with three 6s. Phil's final over saw a 4 from Omar just eluding a valiant diving catch attempt by Sam at deep mid wicket, a skyer which Vignesh at deep mid off just failed to get underneath, and supporting batsman, Naveed, eventually trapped LBW for 10 leaving the score at 131-6 off 20, and Junoon confident of victory.

Mike turned to himself and Sam to finish proceedings, Sam also suffering from Omar's big hitting being taken for 2 successive 6s, one over extra cover, the other over mid wicket. On the first ball of Mike's second over, Omar set off from the non striker's end for a suicidal single, (I can only presume that he wanted the strike to hit the winning runs), only to be sent back by his partner and run out for 43 by a pin-point throw from Vignesh leaving Mike to whip off the bails at the bowler's end. No. 8, Salman, brought the game to a close with a four through mid wicket off the third ball of the over, Junoon running out winners with 155-7 off 22.3.

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After the game Phil and I retired to the Speeds' residence, "just round the corner", (in fact it was about 10 miles away!), to reminisce and ponder what might have been over a couple of Tiger beers. All in all, a good game, played in an excellent spirit, with the pendulum swinging both ways throughout its course... We probably should have got a few more runs after the promising start; some excellent bowling by Anu, with only 17 runs being scored off his 5 overs and no luck whatsoever; a couple of enthusiastic fielding performances from Sam and Dan (who ended up with the majority of his clothing a distinct shade of muddy brown!); and some lusty power hitting by Shamen and Omar, albeit with a few let-offs, finally seeing the opposition home.

Noel Matthews  
PJ, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009