

Match report: Kelawar vs Frontiers – February 27

The Nava Shield 8th round match was played against Frontiers, equally placed with Kelawar on the Nava Shield ladder with 2 losses this season, and an absolute must-win game for Kelawar – though most games this season have been that way!!

Whilst Kelawar, for the first time in recent and distant memory (at least to me), were all counted and attended for by the disciplined 10.00am, there were no players from the opposition in sight, nor were there any umpires to officiate on the tardiness of the opposition players – certainly a perplexing and flummoxing consequence of events that demands a rewrite of the rules of cricket, at least in Malaysia, ok... Kuala Lumpur?!

Immediately encouraging and rampant talk grew of a well-earned and well-deserved victory by forfeit amongst Kelawar's ranks which gathered impetus as the minutes ticked on. But shortly before 10.30am, after players and umpires appeared in a mad dash and scurry from literally no where, all notions of an early start at ~~the bar~~ going home and spending time with family, were quickly dispelled when the skippers trudged out to the middle ahead of the all-important toss.

(It is worth, I guess, communicating that Kelawar's well-known sportsmansheep prior to the toss, the epitome of sportsmansheep that all other teams know and admire Kelawar for (but which I personally find nauseating, irritating and repulsive given I am Australian and have obstinately never learned to spell the word correctly...) was critical in guaranteeing that no penalties, fines, impositions, fees or rulings were applied against the opposition and the umpires owing to their suspiciously deliberate belatedness.)

Unfortunately we lost one of our juniors prior to the game, but gratefully we had an able, ok – available, replacement in Mike Speed, which Frontiers graciously let us employ provided we agree he did not bowl and batted strictly at number eleven. Clearly they must have seen him as something of a real danger man?!?!

Played under sunny and warm conditions with views of Petronas Towers and KL Towers in unusually clear-sight, the batting strip was typical STC - flat, barren, void of any trenches and looking peachy for batting (again) - and there was a little moisture on the outfield, offering a hope of swing or movement or anything to trouble their batsmen.

Losing the toss, we were asked to field.

Our opening bowlers, Graham Wilson and Druvi Storer, started strongly, bowling with decent pace while keeping it pleasantly tight, and ensuring Frontiers confounded openers were left wondering what the rest of Kelawar's awesome (though in truth, delicate, at best) attack had in store for them. After 4 overs, Frontiers had dawdled to 17 runs without a single boundary. Solid!

However in the fifth over, the Frontiers openers – comprising a new player to the competition who landed in the country the day before (yeah, right?!) and a guy who had come straight from his night shift (whatever?!) – began to take a few risks, aided by a couple of looser deliveries from Graham and Druvi. Unfortunately none of those risks found our well-positioned and now alerted fielders; however, they did identify that the moisture on the outfield was enough to hold up the ball short of the boundary on no less than several occasions throughout both innings, something unusual for STC.

While Graham finished his spell with a respectable none for 24 runs, this writer suspects that the Frontier openers now sensed an opening. Ahem, a bowling change in the eighth over brought on Jason Lee who, while beating the bat early, never seriously threatened. At the other end, off-spin was tried in the form of Winny, which initially kept the batsman at bay owing to some full and quick darts that rightly discouraged the batsmen coming out of their ground; however, he was eventually treated with some impropriety when the looser deliveries presented themselves.

By the end of the tenth over, when Jason injured himself by pushing hard in his follow-through to prevent a single to short cover – sadly preventing him from doing much else than limp or

stand at either gully or short fine leg for the rest of the game and watch the leather repeatedly fly by him whilst he cheekily, though *correctly*, directed other less-patient fielders located no closer than thirty to sixty metres away from him to fetch the ball, thereby earning him the nick name Jason 'Anders Limpar' Lee – the Frontiers were 93 without loss.

After two more changes in the bowling, seeing the Chris's (Storer and Speed) operating in tandem with sharpish off-spin and accurate seam-up, the one lone chance in the field came from a showboat paddle behind square off a flighted delivery from the skipper. Unfortunately Mike Speed fumbled the relatively easy chance, citing glaring sunlight, wilful obstruction from the square leg umpire, mid-game exhaustion (not to be confused with mid-week exhaustion common to a man in his fifties), late-middle-age, a trivial hangover and during-the-match lessons for Kelawar's juniors and youngsters on how not to catch a ball, as reasons for his rare, yet never to be forgotten, howler. Thankfully Chris Speed, whilst being on the receiving end of some brutal hits from Frontiers' batsman throughout his spell, was successful the traditional way, cleverly bowling their number three batsmen as he swung across the line. Having already seen one of their openers retire due to tiredness (more of that sportsmansheep crap I suspect – blah blah!!), Kelawar had now limited some of the damage with the score at 110-2 in after 12.

Thereafter, our bowlers, Winny, the Chris' and Druvi did well to restrict Frontiers to 162-3, with the only reel-worthy highlights in the latter overs being some delicate and aware fielding from Sam 'Agile' Barton resulting in a run-out of their remaining opening batsman.

Chasing 163, Kelawar's openers – AMW and Arshad – faced some spritely, though inconsistent bowling from the Frontier openers. Deciding to be bold from the outset – which is a remarkable and notable contrast from his days passed as an embattled, hardened, Boycott-like opener when playing for Battersea Ironside in London – AMW earned himself three lovely boundaries in the second over, including a glorious, effortless straight six that took the score to 21 without loss after two overs. Unfortunately at the other end, Arshad edged behind early to a ball worked across him. Rick Riddell, our number three, was then triggered by the umpire leg before, though there were serious doubts on the correctness of the decision as Rick was well out of his crease to a ball that pitched marginally outside the line (- it was a left hander bowling). Then AMW, after adding a few more to his total, edged behind leaving Kelawar precariously placed - three down in only the 7th over.

Thereafter Winny and Sam put on a tidy middle order partnership of about 25 runs, working the ball around for singles and hitting regular boundaries, although the RRR continued to rise to almost 10 an over. Just as some momentum was building, the 12th over saw the dismissal of Sam, caught behind, and very next ball the dismissal of Graham, to another contentious leg before decision, which Graham was adamant he had hit and that the ball was moving down leg should he have thought/guessed/hoped wrongly about having hit the ball. Resisting the obvious urge to walk the team off owing to another dubious umpire's decision, Kelawar battled and batted on (- more of that sportsmansheep – I'm getting sick writing this!!). After coming out with a runner, 'Limpar' survived the hatrick ball, and swiftly put on 30 in 4 overs with Winnie through a mix of singles, braces and much needed boundaries.

However a terrible, actually stupendous, call by Winnie resulted in the hideous run-out of Sam (running for 'Limpar') kilometres short of safety, and soon after Winnie departed having made a solid and entertaining 64, but thereby effectively ended any hope of a defiant come-from-behind victory. Needing 60 from the final 4 overs, the task was too much for Kelawar's lower order with the Storer's, and Chris Speed, all falling while bravely and rightly seeking victory. Mike Speed DNB – much to the disappointment of the Frontiers' faithful who were hoping to see another one of his awesome batting displays!?!?

In the end, Frontiers' strong batting, with both openers making half centuries, set up their deserved victory. For Kelawar notable mentions go to Chris Speed for his persistent bowling, Winnie for his respectable half-century, and Ben 'no whites with me' Webb who acted as twelfth man though handily forget his whites when asked to field midway through the game by 'Limpar'. The match was played with good-spirits (what the hell is that about ??**@@!?!), and the usual rounds of beers ensued accompanied by smokes, jokes and anecdotes. Just another Saturday morning of cricket for Kelawar CC at STC.