

## Sutton Cricket Club: Chairman's XI v The Paralytics

Match result: Draw.

Chairman's XI 215/9 declared (S Woods 79, D Edwards 55, K Rackal 31, H Gardner 4/31.) Paralytics 214/8 (D White 100no, A Down 32, H Gardner 31.)

At Cheam Road last Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> July, Sutton Cricket Club were delighted to greet players, officials, and followers of 'The Paralytics Cricket Club' for an all-day game against the Sutton CC Chairman's XI.

The 'Paras', is a notable wandering club playing midweek cricket, mostly against clubs in Surrey and surrounds, and usually during clubs Cricket Weeks. The Paras, forever and a day, have traditionally helped celebrate the conclusion of Sutton CC's Cricket Week, gratefully, in the most convivial manner!

This year, however, there was a fixture 'clash'. Consequently, the customary Paras ending to the club's Cricket Week was unable to take place. So, this season the game was brought forward to help fire up the club's 2021 Cricket Week events in a style that is customarily, only witnessed at the end of the week!

Glorious weather greeted everyone on the day. Perfect for festival cricket. Under the watchful eyes of umpires, Christopher Moore, and Clive Quinton, both renowned local officials, skippers Dan Edwards, Chair's XI, and Anthony Down, Paras, flipped the coin to determine the right to choose whether to bat or field at the start of the match. Edwards won, elected to bat, and the game started at 11.40am.

The Chair's openers were Sam 'The Run Machine' Seadon, Sutton CC's 1<sup>st</sup> XI vice-captain, and Krishna G Rackal, club stalwart, director, ex-England U19 (tbc), and recently instituted VP. Truly an opening pair full of cricketing pedigree.

Steady progress was made as the pair moved stylishly to 35 at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> over, Rackal revealing a high-quality technique that belied his lack of recent cricket. This steady start ended when, off the 2<sup>nd</sup> ball of the 15<sup>th</sup> over, a spectacular catch, taken at first slip by Chris Beck off Stefan Van Biljon, saw Seadon dismissed for 15 off 37 balls.

Striding out to join Rackal was Sam Woods. 38 runs were added before the second wicket fell. Attempting a second, Rackal was run out by a fabulous Van Biljon direct throw. Rackal had notched 31 elegantly made runs off 73 balls. The Chair's XI now stood at 73-2 off 23.4 overs, with Woods on 22no.

Russell Coombes joined Woods but soon Coombes was nabbed at mid-on by Down off the spin of Beck for 6 runs. 26 overs gone and the Chair's XI were 83-3 with Woods still there on 28 runs. The pace picked up markedly once Edwards came to the crease; and as the players adjourned for lunch at 1.30pm, at the end of the 34<sup>th</sup> over, the Chair's XI stood on 124-3 with Woods 48no off 69 balls, and Edwards 18no off 15.

Play resumed around an hour or so later but not before a superb lunch, provided by Sutton's Chairman, Neil Clark, and prepared expertly by the club's events chef, Aiden Tierney, was devoured by a grateful gathering. During a short welcoming speech, Neil was extremely magnanimous in relation to several members who currently help manage the club's general administration; and to those who had a hand in organising the day's proceedings, emphasising how dedicated to the cause

they all are; and they were all truly appreciative of Neil's kind words. Everyone enjoyed themselves; it was like the past 18-months had never existed, so good it was to be back on familiar ground, so to speak.

The batsmen and fielders reappeared at around 2.40pm. Woods and Edwards carried on with their significant pre-lunch approach to the game and by 43.2 overs they had completed a 100-run partnership off 104 balls in just 52 minutes; Woods 47no off 58 and Edwards 52no off 46, and the Chair's XI at 185-3.

The game's complexion changed abruptly soon after, once Down brought Harry Gardner on for the 42<sup>nd</sup> over. The final ball of the 44<sup>th</sup> over, Gardner's 2<sup>nd</sup>, had Edwards LBW for 55. Then a sharp caught and bowled in the 46<sup>th</sup> dismissed Keith Gilpin for 4.

198/5 soon became 198/6 as Parth Vyas tempted Woods, who smacked one low down, straight to mid-wicket, for Van Biljon to take a comfortable catch. Woods was out for 79 well-constructed runs off 99 balls. Over the past decade or so, Woods has habitually amassed runs against the Paras. Before Friday's game he averaged 78.4 from 10-games. On Thursday evening he light-heartedly suggested to fellow players at club training, that he would retire on 79 next day. Is not retiring and subsequently being dismissed on 79 a touch of bad karma? Or was there something else going on? Discuss!

Three more wickets soon fell and after exactly 50-over Edwards declared the innings with the hosts on 215-9. Gardner ended with figures of 5-0-31-4.

By the time the Paras started their innings the beautiful weather had disappeared, replaced by clouds, a strong breeze, and a commensurate drop in the temperature. Strange old weather, we have.

Paras opened their innings with wicket keeper David White, and Neil Driscoll. Sam Schofield captured the first wicket; Driscoll, LBW 9, with Paras standing on 12/1 off 2.2 overs. Gardner joined White and the pair jogged along nicely towards tea, taken at the end of 15 overs with the Paras standing on 63/1: White 20no off 42, Gardner 30no off 36.

Play began again at 5.05pm with the game due to finish at 7.00pm. It was agreed that a minimum number of overs, 20, would be bowled from 6.00pm. It was anyone's game at this stage.

The final ball of the 17<sup>th</sup> over saw Gardner dismissed for 31 after a superb caught and bowled by leg-spinning colt Dylan Waldon-Ferguson. At 102, Gary Outram, former SCC, was stumped by Coombes, former SCC, off the bowling of Matt Cawood, former SCC, for 11. At 103, in the 25<sup>th</sup> over, Waldon-Ferguson struck for his second wicket of the day, Vyas LBW for a golden! The Paralytics were tottering at 103-4; but White was still there, 47no and playing confidently.

Down joined White and by the end of the 33<sup>rd</sup> over at 6.00pm they had steered Paras to 137-4. White 66no 96; Down 15 off 24. The 'minimum 20 overs' kicked in and it was still anyone's game!

At 174-4 in the 11<sup>th</sup> of the final 20, Coombes snared a terrific catch low down off Edwards to terminate Down's excellent supportive innings, out for 32 runs off 63 balls. White was playing beautifully and still there with 85 to his name. 9 overs

remained, 5 wickets standing, and 31 runs needed to win. A Paras victory was now looking likely.

Beck joined White at the crease and by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> over the pair had taken the score to 207, looking to all intents and purposes, more than capable of taking the Paras over the winning line. White was on the verge of carrying his bat, standing at 97no off 142 balls, ably supported by Beck 20no off 30. So, 9 runs required off 12 balls.

Enter Coombes again, effecting a stunning piece of wicket keeping wizardry next ball, in dismissing Beck for 20 off Cawood's bowling. 9 needed from 11. Now it was getting interesting! Van Biljon arrived at the crease with the score at 207 but was nailed by Seadon, LBW for 3, off the 3<sup>rd</sup> ball of the final over. 4 runs needed off 3 balls and White was still waiting to secure his century!

Reeves entered the fray and clipped his first ball to square for a single. 3 runs required to win; 2 balls left. White on 99 and on strike. A single taken and White had carried his bat for a wonderfully assembled 100no off 145 balls. Reeves back on strike. One ball left and 2 runs to win. Seadon to bowl the final ball of the over and of the match. The tension in the ground ratcheted up a notch. Seadon runs in, bowls a perfect yorker, and Reeves' middle stump flies towards Cheam Rd.

A splendid game of cricket ends in a draw. A lovely day, great entertainment all the way, and a fair result to end a classic festival contest. Hats off to everyone who participated, whether on the pitch or off it. Looking forward to the next year's encounter already!

Scorecard here.