

## **PATTAYA CRICKET CLUB (PCC) WIN THE CHIANG MAI BIG BASH INTERNATIONAL 8'S TOURNAMENT**

PCC took a strong team of 10 players with plenty of expertise and had high hopes of doing well in this prestigious event – in marked contrast to last year's dismal performance. Support was provided in the form of a Barmy Army, ie Bobby, Shaun, Andy's Dad, Andy's Mum and musical assistance from Ruddy Lorrimer.

The tournament was held at the Gymkhana Club on 22 and 23 February at Chiang Mai. There were two cricket clubs from Hong Kong (DBCC Lions and DBCC Lana), two teams from Chiang Mai (CMCC and All Stars), Patong Cricket Club and Pattaya Cricket Club. Each team would have 8 players and 8 overs would be bowled per innings (max 2 overs per bowler). There would be 4 points for a win, 2 for a tie and 0 for a loss. Bonus points were awarded for batting and taking wickets. Each team would play 3 matches and their final position would dictate who they played for the Cup, Shield and Plate trophies.

PCC's first match was against CMCC, previous winners of the tournament. PCC won the toss and chose to bat. In essence this match set the tone for how PCC would play - big hitting from Matt Harkness and Wez Masterton and a tight bowling attack that took wickets and earned bonus points. CMCC were hit for 82 with 31 (Not Out) from Matt and 25 from Wez. There were a few silly runs outs (Venky Rajagopalan and Ian Liddel), but the fielding was pretty good. So, 82 for 3 and a defensible score.

CMCC had some renowned big hitters and it was essential to keep them under control. Abaid Ullah went in the first over for 4, caught by Venky off Matt and a real scalp. Young Hamza Khan with his fast, unusual bowling action and in his first tournament, bowled aggressively and took Asif Noor for 10 in the second over. A great start. Ian Liddel, Wez, Hamza and Richard Holt kept the run rate down in the middle overs and took a wicket. Matt caught Tansy in the last over off Wez and CMCC could only manage 60 for 3. PCC won by 22 runs with 7 points.

PCC's second match of the day was against DBCC Lana. Again, PCC won the toss and decided to bat. Richard and Wez opened with Wez taking most of the strike before falling for 21. Richard was bowled for 11 with the score on 50 and Matt, dropped on 5, was swinging the willow with 5 4's and a 6 off 17 balls before retiring on 31 Not Out. Venky was dropped on his first ball and then hit a 6. Luke Stokes and his still slightly wibbly wobbly knee managed 10 Not Out and PCC finished on a good score of 96 for 2.

DBCC Lanna opened with John Scales and Elliot Lodge, but lost John for 6 in the first over to a brilliant catch by Richard Holt off Matt Harkness. Venky damaged the nail on his middle finger and retired hurt – he thought major surgery was required, but a bit of tissue paper and 2 plasters were sufficient. The Khan family, Salman and Hamza, bowled very tidily with Hamza bowling Matt Bray for 10. Elliot Lodge and Martin Peters kept the scoreboard ticking but never at a fast-enough rate and although they retained their wickets, Lanna's innings closed at 74 for 2 and PCC won by 22 with 7 points.

This left PCC at No 1 in the league table at the end of the day on 14 points along with All Stars, but PCC had a better net run rate. Day 2 would see the last 3 matches before the finals and it was highly likely The Final would be PCC versus All Stars.

PCC's final league match was against Patong. Simon Philbrook, PCC Captain, won the toss again and chose to bat. Wez and Matt opened and after a quiet first over, 5 runs, they set about the bowlers.

Between them they smashed 11 4's and 2 6's before they retired on 34 and 33 respectively. Venky and his damaged finger took the field. He hit a ball straight back to Imtiaz but it was too hard to hold and Venky survived to score 11 Not Out. Salman added a few and Mr Extras made a valued contribution of 20. PCC scored 101 for 0 – an insurmountable challenge for most teams.

Patong took the field with Craig Morgan (a prolific scorer) and Raju. Matt opened the PCC attack with almost immediate success as Craig skied a ball and was Caught and Bowled. The batsman crossed so Matt bowled Raju on the last ball of the over. A terrible start for Patong at 7 for 2 and Matt was on a hat-trick. Things got worse for Patong when Michael Flowers went for 3 in the next over, bowled by Hamza. 12 for 3 off 2 overs and the writing was on the wall. Imtiaz and Stuart Hamilton came to the rescue with 32 and 31 respectively before retiring, but it was too little and too late. In the final over Matt returned to bowl for his hat-trick. A dot ball, but the pressure to score got Saju Abraham and Sajal Gaur run out on consecutive balls at the end of the over. Patong scored 77 for 5. PCC won by 24 runs and gained 9 points.

All Stars also won their 3<sup>rd</sup> match and so, as predicted, the final was set, PCC versus All Stars.

AS won the toss and chose to field. As usual PCC opened with Wez and Matt. AS opened their attack with Buhran and Ismail and they managed to contain PCC with quick accurate bowling. Wez and Matt bided their time, scored what they could and preserved their wickets. At halfway it was 30 for 0 off 4 overs. Time to turn up the wick against the second-tier bowlers. Wez got a lucky 6 as he was dropped on the boundary by Akib (a wee Thai lad), then got a 4 and then hit another ball down Akib's throat – only to be dropped again. Wez and Matt smashed 5 6's and 4 4's until they retired on 36 and 31 respectively. Luke and Venky kept the scoreboard turning over with a few boundaries and some quick running until they had a circus clown moment and tried to get Luke run out, but he was saved by a miss-field at the bowler's end. PCC scored 93 for 0 and challenging total.

AS sent in Sami and Buhran who faced Matt. Buhran was bowled for a duck on the second ball and Ismail arrived to take a few edgy shots. Ian took the second over and had Ismail caught by a stupendous catch by Wez at long-on. 15 for 2 off 2 overs and a superb start for PCC. Sami and Tariq set about the PCC bowlers aided by some slack fielding. 1's were being turned into 4's and this allowed AS to reach 48 for 2 off 4 overs and they were 18 runs ahead. Something needed to be done to stem the flow. Enter Man of the Match, Richard Holt. He had Sami caught by Wez at Long-off and bowled Tariq off the last ball for 6 runs in the over. However, at this point PCC fielders lost their composure and turned into clowns which prompted the Barmy Army Trumpeter to blow unflattering tunes. Matt dropped a skier, then threw over throws; Ian had a ball bounce over his head for 4 and Wez dropped a catch (Firdous for the second time). More circus clown music. Firdous was eventually run out for 17 and Venky dropped a catch off the last ball of the innings, injuring yet another finger. However, it didn't matter, AS had only managed 84 for 5. PCC had won the match by 11 runs and the Tournament.

In the other Finals, the Shield was won by DBCC Lions who beat DBCC Lanna, and in the Plate Final CMCC beat Patong. There was not a Man of the Tournament award but it would probably gone to Matt Harkness with 129 Not Out from 4 innings and bowled 7 overs, 74 for 5. He was certainly PCC's player of the Tournament.

It was a fantastic weekend. Really good cricket played in the best possible spirit and great organisation by the Gymkhana Club, David Walker as the sponsor, George Appleton organising the umpires, Lockie and his scorers, the ground staff, the ladies behind the bar etc.