

PCC finish 2nd in the League with a loss to Asian Stars CC, but could still win the Finals

PCC should have played Marina CC at the Terdthai Cricket Ground last weekend, but the hopes of a sure-fire win and 2 points were washed away as the pitch submerged under April storms and so no points were awarded. Instead, PCC would have to beat The Asian Stars to win the league and ensure that any further matches washed out by rain would be won by the team finishing higher in the league.

Despite the fact that Thursday was a public holiday some of the PCC players were still working and could not attend the match at Horseshoe Point. Apart from this being a local derby against PCC's nemesis, this was a match with a difference. Both teams had batsmen that preferred pace on the ball and the recent rain had softened the ground, so runs were going to be hard earned against spin and a slow outfield. It would be essential to keep extras to a minimum, but yet again PCC had an attack of wayward bowling and it cost them dearly.

The Captains, Wez Masterton and Dharmesh Mer, conducted the toss before the umpires, Sanjeev Jeya and Vaughan McClear. Dharmesh won the toss and decided to bowl first, so Wez and Ryan driver got padded-up. Hardik Rathod and Dharmesh opened the bowling with far more swing and less pace which restricted the run rate to 3 per over as opposed to the normal 8. Wez was getting frustrated, so swings and misses abounded until he got a thin edge in the second over which was snaffled by the keeper. Gone for 8. Not a good start. Luke Stokes took the crease and kept out the accurate bowling of Hardik and Dharmesh. Mohammed Saqlain and Imran Cheena took up the attack and gave a little more room for manoeuvre with both Ryan and Luke finding boundaries and the run rate increased to 5 but it was hard graft out there. Ryan hit a single towards backward point and sauntered down the wicket but he forgot that it was Bilal Rana fielding. A direct hit on the non-strikers end sent Ryan back to the tent for just 13 from 32 balls in the 11th over – 53 for 2. Jainish Parikh took the crease but he was not there for long as he hit a ball straight back to Bilal and he went for 2. Meanwhile Luke was picking his shots and getting a boundary in most overs. Drinks were taken early and Rapreet Singh went out to support Luke, but he was kept under wraps by Bilal and dismissed via a catch from Ronik Soni off Dharmesh's bowling for 1. Habby Sing fared no better as he only faced 2 balls from Dharmesh before being bowled. Luke decided to smash Mohammed for 25 from 2 overs to keep the run rate up, but he was losing partners fast at 89 for 5 in the 19th over. Things were about to get a lot worse. Trevor Moolman lasted 14 minutes and 10 balls before he was bowled by Imran and 114 for 6, but it was Bilal that was going to cut the head off the snake with 3 wickets in the 23rd over. First was Luke, stumped on a magnificent 77 and then Steve Christie caught by Humayun Choudhary for a 2 ball duck and Reds Liddel stumped for a Golden Duck. 117 for 9 and could El Dutchie help Simon Philbrook get to the 25th over. Answer, no. Simon got a boundary 4 from Imran but was bowled 3 balls later for 5 and PCC were all out for 117 from 23.4 overs. Dharmesh had taken 3 for 16 and Bilal had 4 for 27. Excellent bowling from the Asian Stars and some silly mistakes from PCC who would have to field and bowl like their lives depended upon it to defend 117.

The Asian Stars opened with their usual pair of Hardik and Dharmesh against Ryan and Rapreet. Ryan started with a maiden and Rapreet bowled Dharmesh for 2 in the first over and a brilliant start. Ryan's next over was another maiden with the added spice of bowling Hardik for a duck – a dream start and the battle was on. Ajay Bijwe (AJ) and Bilal took the crease and batted with determination to protect their wickets. Runs were very hard to acquire and the run rate was only 2 per over, but they were prepared to see out Ryan and Rapreet which they did. It was a very good tactic because at this point the PCC bowlers

lost their composure with 8 wides from Habby and 3 from Crunch (Steve Christie) plus a No Ball. Asian Stars began to score at 7 per over and were catching up. Bilal hit a fierce drive which Reds (Ian Liddel) could not hold onto, but Bilal played the same stroke next ball and was caught by a long chase from Ryan for 11 off Habby. 29 for 3 in the 12th over. Waseem Rassa (Sam) took the crease and the tempo of the match changed. Sam scored several boundaries against Crunch and Jainish, whilst Jainish added to the anguish by bowling 8 wides. AJ got to the 16th over which was started by Habby, but he injured his leg and retired. The over was continued by Jainish when AJ was dropped by Trevor on a simple catch, but luckily AJ was bowled next ball by Jainish for 17. 57 for 4 and still a tad behind. Sam continued to push the score along at an ever-increasing pace with the help of Imran who made 5 before he was LBW to Crunch, 88 for 5 in 19th over and the scores were level. Sam smashed Jainish for 18 off one over which included 5 wides and wickets were needed desperately as Asian Stars began to take control. Mazahar Mugal came in for a quick 5 runs before he was LBW to Jainish but it was too little too late or too many wides too late for PCC. Sam got the final runs from EL Dutchies single over and Asian Stars had scored 118 in 22 overs and won by 4 wickets.

The Man of the Match was awarded to Sam for his 55 not out. The result meant that PCC finished 2nd and Asian Stars finished 3rd in the League. The top 4 will enter a knockout competition this weekend to settle who is eliminated (Asian Stars CC or Pakistan CC) and who will get through to the final (PCC or Bangkok CC). 3rd/4th winner will go to the semi-finals with the loser of the 1st/2nd match, with the winner of the semi-final going on to the final.

PCC would like to thank their sponsors; the Outback Bar, the Magic Bar, the Ayen Bar and the Pattaya Sports Group for their valuable and much appreciated support.