

MATCH REPORT
LNZCC vs GENTS OF CAMBRIDGE
22 MAY 2022

A new fixture for this season, the Gentlemen of Cambridge are a wandering side with roots in Camden CC's Thursday XI (the cause of many of your correspondent Andrew Haines's afternoon absences from the lab over the Cambridge summers). Since Camden's implosion, the side has been held together by the sheer force of will of their enigmatic and eccentric skipper **Gavin Ayliffe**, recruiting from various clubs in the district with a view to playing good quality cricket with good quality blokes.

Outstanding levels of commitment saw seven of the Lambs and Rams drag their aching bodies (and in some cases, heads) up to Cambridge for the double-header, to be joined by some newer faces to the club (father-son duo **Shekhar and Shayan Aryan** down from Leeds in their third appearance, and **James Leslie** in his second) and one somewhat-less-new face in **Tony Penman**, who was delighted to finally play a fixture without having to make his usual 300-mile round trip from Suffolk.

Andrew Haines started strongly by arriving late and immediately losing the toss, and Ayliffe, resplendent as ever in whites comprising dress shirt, suspenders, and traditional moleskin trousers, had no hesitation in sending LNZCC out to field. Drama ensued from ball one, when GoC opener **Temoor Khan** clipped the left-armer Leslie to square leg only for the chance to go down. Two balls later **Khan** already was making us suffer, dispatching the shiny new Dukes to the neighbouring railway fence, never to be seen again.

Leslie continued to cause difficulty, picking up the first two wickets of the day: one bowled and one LBW; both danger men. He deserved another after drawing a thick edge to gully only to be let down by his skipper palming into the air and not quite managing to regather. Consolation came from the ever-sympathetic cordon... "it doesn't hurt if you catch it!"

Meanwhile, from the other end **Vaughan Robertson** was toiling under the baking sun, finally being rewarded with an LBW from the final ball of his eight-over spell, in which he sent down four maidens and conceded only 17 runs.

Shayan and Shekhar were the change bowlers and both created plenty of interest straight away, with **Shayan** finding a perfect line outside off to induce a nick through to the gloves of **Adam Khanbhai**. **Shekhar** was unlucky not to remove Khan after a powerfully-struck cut found a hand at point but failed to stick, while **Shayan** claimed his second victim straight after drinks, finding the edge of the GoC's Kiwi keeper **Ben Fawkes** that was (thankfully) clung on to at gully by **Haines**. Father and son bowled well in tandem, returning 0-39 and 2-52 respectively from each of their seven overs.

Penman was characteristically difficult to get away on a low track, apologetically trapping the GoC's number seven plumb in front with one that shot through on his way to 1-13 from three overs. **Dan Robinson** picked up where **Penman** left off, creating a team hat-trick opportunity after **Josh Wright** first combined with **Khanbhai** for a run-out and then caught the subsequent delivery after it was spooned to midwicket. **Robinson** finished with 1-10 from his two.

From the other end **Ben Fulton's** leg spin was finding plenty of purchase in a very tidy spell of 1-17 from four overs, throughout which the GoC failed to find the boundary. His wicket came when a slog-sweep that seemed like it would threaten the passing trains instead arced downwards to be caught superbly on the square-leg boundary by **Shayan**.

Leslie returned to close out the innings, striking again in the penultimate over to collect the final wicket of **Ayliffe**, who skied it over the bowler's head to be caught by his counterpart coming around from mid-off. **Leslie** finished as the pick of the bowlers with 3-47 from 7.5 overs (including one maiden), which could easily have been a five-for had we held onto our chances.

The GoC posted 202 largely thanks to the efforts of **Khan**, who carried his bat for 121* – over a hundred runs clear of the next-top scorer. He made the most of the opportunities we gave him, cutting and pulling confidently despite the less-than-even bounce on display, and demonstrating the truth of the old adage “if you're going to flash, flash hard” with any false strokes that we did manage to induce flying well clear of the field.

At the interval, it'd be fair to say that we felt pretty good, with a high-quality batting line-up set to chase a total that we'd managed to restrict to 20–30 short of what we felt to be par. We tucked into the superlative lunch of Sri Lankan lamprais (curried chicken legs, rice, tuna cutlet, aubergine sambal, and cashew chutney, all wrapped up in banana leaves) and felt even better.

By now regular readers of the LNZCC weekly update will be piecing together the combination of “strong batting side”, “chase-able total”, and “epic lunch” with a growing sense of trepidation.

Khanbhai headed out with **Haines** to open our account, but was on his way back to the pavilion with 4 to his name after nicking the third ball of the innings behind. **Robinson** collected 7 before rather unluckily picking out the midwicket fielder whilst flicking off his pads in the third over. **Cheyne Voss's** 8 came from two superb cover drives from consecutive deliveries, before he chopped on in the sixth. **Wright** played around a straight one to be out for 5 in the ninth, bringing **Fulton** to the crease.

Just as a partnership seemed to be developing, the temptation of a full ball was too much for **Haines** on 26, and the only wooden sound following the big swish was that of middle stump. Coming in at seven in the 14th over, **Penman** was a wall in the face of some very useful leg spin from **Khan** (who somehow still had the energy to bowl) but ultimately skied one to fall for 1 in the 19th.

With leg spin from both ends, **Shekhar** ably supported **Fulton** in putting together a partnership of 36 (the best of the innings) before he was trapped LBW for 9 in the 28th. **Shayan** replaced his father and frustrated the efforts of the leggies until a bowling change yielded a catch, sending him back for 0 in the 33rd.

With the required run rate now over 10.5, **Fulton** put his foot down, bringing up a well-made 50 with a towering six just as a rainbow peeked out of the clouds in the distance – surely not a coincidence given the quality of the batting display. Unfortunately, swinging for the railway line a couple of overs later, he was bowled for 60.

Robertson and **Leslie** were left with the insurmountable task of 67 runs required from the final 5 overs, and ultimately scored 9 a piece with **Robertson** run out in the 39th, LNZZC falling well short with 158.

Plenty of consolation was on offer with a generous selection of New Zealand craft beer put on by the GoC, supplemented with a few of LNZZC entrepreneur **Benji Flacks'** hard seltzers. Prizes of Hawke's Bay cabernet sauvignon were awarded to two leg-spinning batters: by LNZZC to **Khan** for his match-winning 121* and tidy figures of 1-27 from 9; and by the GoC to **Fulton** for his superb 60 and "devilish" bowling.

Yarns were spun, beverages were drunk, your correspondent was damn near eaten alive by midges that seemed to ignore everyone else, and a great time was had by all. It was a fantastic day out despite the result, and certainly a fixture to repeat.

The photo below is of the LNZZC XI that played against the Gentlemen of Cambridge