

MATCH REPORT
LNZCC vs OXFORD DOWNS CC
26 JUNE 2022

Sunday 26th June found London New Zealand travelling West to Oxford Downs Cricket Club for an afternoon declaration match. A solid two-and-a-half-hour trip including a rescue mission into South London for the AWOL scorebook, was the first order of the day, trumped only by the Tony Penmanesque dedication of Shekar Ayrar, travelling over three hours down from Leeds.

With those travelling by car arriving within plenty of time, first time match manager Brendon Read got preceding's underway winning the toss and electing to bat first. Play was to commence at 2pm however a missed train out of London and an extortionate taxi ride from Oxford train station later saw LNZ commence its batting innings 15mins past the hour.

Oxford Downs opening pair of Cameron, a New Zealander from Canterbury, and Hirst started off with some tidy line and length. The waiting batsmen wondering if the ball was invisible with Adam Khanbai struggling to get willow on leather. Debutant Ross ter Braak, in the UK as a club professional, putting his hand up to open at the other end, soon had the score ticking along finding the boundary towards the clubhouse multiple times even though it was bigger than the MCG. No biggie though for the man contracted with the Auckland Aces for the 2022/23 summer. After 7 overs of shadow batting in the middle by Khanbai, the bowler finally realised he needed to bowl on the stumps which brought about Khanbai's untimely demise. Andrew Neal was next to the crease, however the invisible ball returned, and a full pitched delivery soon saw Neal's castle knocked over, returning to the pavilion the following over. Not long after there was another disaster. Khanbai lost a full pint over his playing trousers as he sat down on the picnic table. Somehow the bar manager took pity on this travesty and the empty pint was full once more, free of charge. Next in was Leith Cowie who didn't need to push the run rate as ter Braak was doing a fine job of this until he was caught off the bowling of G Barnes for a fine 59, hitting 10 boundaries and a single maximum. The left-armed G. Barnes looked menacing however, sporting a fine headband, Barnes resembled a combination of Sam Curran and Stuart Broad. With Cowie and Andrew Milward now in the middle, LNZ needed a revival, sadly both were out in quick succession scoring 3 and 1 respectively, LNZ under a lot of pressure at 81 for 5.

Queue Shekar Ayrar and Greigan Pankhurst. If you need a middle order fightback, make sure you have these men on speed dial. Putting on 60 runs for the 6th wicket scoring 32 and 34 respectively. The pair showing some with some fine form with the bat, rotating the strike well with the odd boundary thrown in, LNZ were back on with a chance to post a good declaration score. Oxford Downs feeling the game was getting away from them brought on their secret weapon in the form of their skipper Dan Hawes. Hawes was very effective at ensuring the flight of his spin bowling was well and truly above the eye line. He took two wickets in his first over undoing Pankhurst and John McMullan. With time running out before a fair and reasonable declaration could be made, the word was sent out to the middle to crack on with it. Mike McClean and Brendon Read knocking a quick fire 19 and 16 respectively both duped by Hawes stranding Nick Teulon not out on 11. Shot of the day hands down going to Teulon with a reverse sweep for 6, which will go down in folklore at Oxford Downs. LNZ bowled out for 197 which brought about the tea break.

Leading into the second stanza the men grouped tightly together for the presentation of a Nottman Cap to Pankhurst. Well overdue, having played his fifth match in the BC (before covid) years, poetically

he received his Nottman Cap on the same ground he made his LNZ debut. The rising speech made all the more memorable by debutant ter Braak quickly whipping off his hat mid speech thinking it may have been for him. Once the applause and few giggles at ter Braak's expense subsided, LNZ took the field, certain we had hooked our debutant for four more matches at least.

Opening the bowling, Teulon and Read got the 2nd innings underway, Oxford Downs requiring 198 of approximately 35 overs. Some aggressive batting and some loose delivery's saw Oxford Downs off to a flyer, they were 61 without loss after 9 overs. A change of bowling saw Ayran take a wicket in his first over getting LNZ on the board in defence of their seemingly under-par score. A double change found McClean bowling at the other end and a fine spell he had too, clawing back the run rate over a 10 over spell in conjunction with Leith Cowie bowling some dodgy off spin. Trying to protect a shorter straight boundary, Cowie's spin was effective and the bowling combination of Cowie and McClean pulled LNZ right back into the match, making a draw a real possibility. A draw would've felt as good as a win on a flat wicket and the home side batting aggressively, trusting the pace and bounce. McClean was the pick of the bowlers finishing with figures of 10 overs, 1 maiden, 3 wickets for 40 runs notably picking up the wicket of the Oxford Downs opener Charan who scored a fine 66 putting the home side in the trump position. And whilst McClean's long spell and excellent bowling were definitely on the highlights reel, so was the 50th LNZ wicket for Cowie. A man who usually opens the bowling for the club picks up the milestone with his first ever stumping. So, as the sun was setting, almost in the eye line of the batsmen, the stage was also set for a thrilling finish. With 6 overs to play Oxford Downs were 164 for 5 requiring 34 runs for the win, LNZ battling for the draw. But with the bar having been open for the past 4 hours, the incoming batsmen were ripe for the picking.

It was to be another first that bought about the end of the match, Cowie picking up his second wicket in his 8th over, that of the opening bowler Hirst out hit wicket. This will sadly have a wee asterix in the scorebook however as in the flow of hitting the ball and falling on his wicket, Hirst unfortunately dislocated his knee. With Hirst sprawled on the floor in agonising pain, the Captains decided to shake hands and call the game a draw whilst we waited for the ambulance to arrive.

Another fantastic fixture, the Oxford Downs grounds in great condition, excellent facilities and just a great bunch to play against. The teams hoping to play the last 6 overs of a finely poised match next year for the bragging rights.

Thanks to all for making the trip out to Oxford Downs, without your dedication the Club would not be what it is!

Match Result: LNZ 197/10 (Ross ter Braak 59, Greigan Pankhurst 34, Shekar Ayran 32) drew with Oxford Downs 164/6 (Mike McClean 3/40, Leith Cowie 2/41)