

Final pre-season game done-and-dusted [posted 26/04/15]

West of Scotland were today's hosts as another Poloc XI took to the park in the final game of this pre-season. There were first run outs for Abid Shuja, Matt Stout, Shaan Khan, Amaan Ali and Noaman Ishtiaq in a match that would end in defeat by eight wickets. However, and as ever, the match provided useful match practice for all the players. By agreement twelve players were selected, with only eleven batting, and in a second innings that saw *West* chase 152 to win, ten bowlers were used.

Back to the first innings for now though. *Flanners* guessed wrong and the Poloc XI was batting. Chris' and *Scotty* opened, but the latter (3) was quickly back in the pavilion playing on whilst trying an extravagant early drive. 14 for 1 then became 23 for 2 - after a brief rain delay - as *Coya* (3) followed *Scotty* back to the hutch, cleaned up by McNulty. 37 runs were then added by Abid and Chris' before the latter was caught behind off the innocuous slow left arm bowling of McKechnie. Chris' had again "got in", getting to 32, and was frustrated at his dismissal. But he wouldn't be alone as two more of McKechnie's hand grenades quite literally blew up under Abid (23) and *Flanners* (22). The latter had struggled in the middle after pulling a quad muscle and was maybe - from a pain perspective - not massively unhappy to be sitting at the side instead of limping in the middle. 93 for 5 was the scoreboard total when *Flanners* became McKechnie's third victim, and it'd be six down 7 runs later when *Mushy* departed for 1, chipping what looked like an above-waist-high full-toss from McAuley to square leg. 100 for 6.

Matt Stout and *Uzzi* then steadied the ship, adding 41 in six overs, both despatching anything wayward to the boundary and running hard between the wickets. But their 41-run partnership wouldn't last beyond this, Matt being bowled by Leggat's first delivery as the *West* skipper brought himself in to the attack. Leggat would end up with a "3-for" come the end of the innings, capturing Shaan's (1) and Noaman's (0) wickets too. 151 all out, Amaan the not out batter. 152 to win.

After the tea interval, and with *Flanners* off the field due to his injury, stand-in skipper *Coya* opened with Noaman and *Mushy*. 37 for 0 nine overs later reflected a decent opening spell from each of the two opening bowlers, albeit without a break-through being made. *Mushy* in particular - 5-1-11-0 - had bowled tightly. *Crazy Horse* was the first bowling change made, but *Coya* would take the opportunity to let all the fielders, bar 'keeper Abid, have a bowl. In the final analysis *West* ran out eight-wicket winners, Singh top-scoring with 57, and the two wickets to fall seeing Matt Stout pick up Singh's wicket and *Scotty* run out Farndale backing up at the non-striker's end as the *west* opener saw Scott deflect a return blow from Singh onto the stumps.....off his own bowling! 😊

So defeat, but a good run out for the side on a pretty chilly day. The frustration was that, on the day, the defeat can be attributed to a few simple things: the Poloc XI didn't use over seven of their allotted overs. Only two partnerships of more than 25 were built, and none more than 37. Then in the second innings - though *West* were never ahead on the "worm" - the Poloc XI gifting their hosts 32 in wides and no balls was criminal. So again the message is reiterated: bat your overs, build partnerships, and limit extras. *Simples!* By contrast *West* of Scotland conceded just 10 runs in wides and no balls, and their first-wicket partnership of 83 all-but sealed their win.

Next up: league action!

Some positives despite defeat to Uddy [posted 25/04/15]

It was a bright, sunny, but chilly day that greeted the Poloc side that made the short trip to Bothwell Castle Policies to take on Uddingston in the annual Eric Lane Memorial Trophy match. After the toss, it was the home side who would have first use of the track, *Ihty* and Aliyan with the new ball. And the two young Poloc seamers bowled impressively up-front, restricting *Uddy's* experienced top order, Allan, Rai and Hafeez (last season's Weirs professional) to just 29 for 1, Allan the man out, trapped in front by *Ihty*. By halfway the home side's total had moved on to 74 for 2, Rai the second batter out, caught by *Ihty* off Abhi's bowling. Hasseeb was also in to the attack, but *Crazy Horse* struggled a little and so, as Abhi' bowled his ten overs straight through, *Pasty* brought Chris' into the attack. Then, with Abhi' bowled out it was spin at both ends, *Pasty* rolling his arm over too. And the tactic bore fruit, as the two took seven *Uddy* wickets between them. Chris' returned figures of 10-3-

25-3 and *Pasty* 7-0-15-4 as they got rid of Hafeez (33), Gul (22) and Bradley (6), and Martin (19), McKenzie (5), Husain (0) and Clarke (8) respectively. With Bawa adding a cheeky wee unbeaten 20 with last man Dunne (10*), the innings eventually closed on 161 for 9 after the 50 overs were done. 162 to win.

The reply would stutter along from the start however as wickets fell at too regular intervals and partnerships - as they'd been in the first innings - proved hard to create. 13 for 1 became 57 for 7 before lower order application from *Ihty* (38*) showed that batting maybe wasn't as hard as most of the other batters had made it look. As in the Uddingston XI innings, only two batters would get past 20, with Chris' hitting 29 before holing out. For *Uddy* there was a "3-for" for *The Barometer* and a brace of wickets each for fellow veterans McKenzie and Gul, and Hafeez. *Ihty* eventually ran out of partners however, and - disappointingly in the context of the match result - the side was bowled out 40 runs short of their target with still 42 deliveries to be bowled.

However pre-season matches aren't all about the result, and like last week's game at Prestwick, things were learned from the game that will help in the preparation for next week's league opener. The positives were the seamers' spells, in *Ihty's* and Aliyan's cases their opening spells. Chris's and *Pasty's* bowling in tandem was also decent and dealt with Uddingston's middle order. The biggest area for improvement was the batting, in particular the application. Chris' "getting in" again, but maybe not really capitalising after having done so will frustrate him, as will other batters' short stays in the middle. *Ihty's* knock was encouraging and he showed good maturity in managing the tail, in particular Hasseeb who - though scoring only 6 - hung around and faced 55 balls to see 46 added for the ninth wicket.

Tomorrow sees the final pre-season match, another Poloc XI match, away at Hamilton Crescent against West of Scotland XI.

Season opener [posted 18/04/15]

A new season got underway at the Henry Thow Oval with a pre-season friendly between a Poloc XI and hosts Prestwick. It was a 50 overs-a-side match, that kicked-off at noon in pleasantly warm weather. The Poloc XI side featured a number of the club's talented youngsters with no fewer than five juniors in the line-up. Playing along side established 1st XI regulars *Ihty* and Owais, were Lewis James, Uzzair Shah and Aliyan Qureshi. Also in the side, and making club debuts, were Azeem Akbar and 2015's "Overseas Amateur" Christopher Graham.

After the toss it would be the Poloc XI to bat first, home side skipper Rafiq inviting *Pasty* to have first use of the wicket. *Pasty* and Chris' opened and put on 14 for the first wicket, the former being dismissed playing a Thakur leg-stump full toss onto his pads and seeing it ricochet on to his stumps. Chris' was then joined by Owais batting at three, and these two would add 107 for the second wicket, Chris' making the most of the life he'd been given when he was dropped first ball, at square leg. He'd be second out having made 55, bowled by Rao. And then unfortunately for the side, and frustratingly, Owais followed him back to the pavilion just 7 runs later when, with the score on 128, he picked out Thakur at mid-wicket, trying to slog-sweep Rao. A fourth-wicket partnership between *Flanners* and Uzzair however, ensured that a decent total would be posted and there'd be no collapse. *Flanners* compiled a nice 40 from just 49 deliveries, and Uzzair, still just thirteen, made a mature 20. After these two departed, and perhaps understandably as late innings runs were sought, there were a few more dismissals, the side eventually posting 220 for 8, with Aliyan and Abhishek the not out batters. 221 to win then for the Prestwick XI, for whom Thakur had taken a "4-for", and Rao a brace of wickets. Rowan, Morrison, Rafiq and Tennant, all experienced campaigners, went wicketless in their seventeen overs which says much for the strength of the home line up, and the way the young Poloc side equipped themselves.

In the home reply, Azeem Akbar, a.k.a. *Izzy* made good early inroads bowling in tandem with *Ihty*. 11 for 1 became 11 for 2, and then two more wickets fell with the total on just 41. *Izzy*, had taken all four of the wickets, cleaning up Miller, Morrison, Rowan and Rao. Opener Stafford (36) would, however, hang around and make a valuable contribution, and, with Rafiq, added 59 for the fifth wicket. Then, with the score on 100, for the third time in the innings two wickets fell on the

same score. 100 for 5, then 100 for 6, as Stafford and then Calum Rodger departed, both wickets going to Chris' Graham who'd come in to the attack with his part-time *offies*. But Rafiq continued to swing, and he'd end up unbeaten on 83 with Robertson (46*) for company, his winning knock being assisted by him being dropped twice on the boundary, albeit both chances coming relatively late on.

Overall then, and particularly taking account of the youngsters gaining valuable senior cricket experience, and against a strong home side, this was a very useful run out for the side. On the plus side were Chris's, Owais's and Flanner's knocks, albeit perhaps each will think they should have "gone on" having "got in". Then with the ball, *Izzy's* "4-for" was encouraging. In the areas for improvement column however will be awareness and concentration in the field, as well as improved fitness and agility. Gifting 29 runs in wides is also categorised as a "criminal act"! 😡

Next week there are three more pre-season matches with Uddingston home and away on Saturday, and a trip to Hamilton Crescent on Sunday.