

Win over West [posted 15/08/17]

Our intrepid reporter writes, "OOOIIIIIIIIII!!!!!! On Tuesday evening there appeared to be a certain buzz around Shawholm. Why? Was it a testimonial game for a certain player? Was it an international game? All we know, was that it was your typical *Panthers* game.

"The *Panthers* were going into the final game of the Evening League season without their star players, *Adder Maddock*, 'The Finisher', who has been signed for Australia, and *Moeen Ali* who is injured. This led to some commotion as the *Panthers* were struggling to assemble a team, fortunately the Academy game was cancelled which led to a scramble of Academy players stating their availability. On a first come, first served, basis, the wannabe Vice-Captain *Maal Island*-sponsored Abdullah was drafted in, along with Zakir *Sinakey*. However, there was twist: rumour has it that Zakir *Sinakey's* manager called in to advise that he couldn't play as he had a game on Friday, which led to Amaan Ali son of *Ali Ali* being the next in line.

"Now with the team selected, *Umar* Gulfam went up to the Captain *MI Cobra* and passed him a coin, terming it as 'The Lucky Coin'. *MI Hanif* went for the toss, and would you believe it or not, the *Panthers* won the toss. OOOIIIIIIIIII!!!!!! Those were the war cries from the *Panthers* team when they found out they were batting first. The air horns were blowing, scarfs and flags waving and random outbursts of OOOIIIIII's!!!!!!

"The *Panthers* went out to bat first with Zakir Siddiqui relegated to the side-lines as mascot, keeping the spirit alive within the *Panthers* squad. The opening batters were *Bogezy Malone* (Hunnain the *Bogeyman*), and Murtaza, with the overs reduced to 18 due to light. *The Cobra's* advice was to 'play your natural game'. And that is precisely what *Bogezy Malone* did, blocked the first ball, which then led to him unleashing his *Bogey* that's haunted his own team and the opposition all season. With the *Bogey* unleashed, this caused some fury to the opening bowler, who was so 'vexed', he came charging in and bounced *Bogezy*, aiming right at the *Bogey*. Hunnain selfishly, instead of swatting it away for 4, put his bat in the air to protect the slimeball stuck in his nostril, and 'Howzat!', out caught. *Panthers* one down. Hunnain out for a duck? No he was out for a 'bogey'.

"This brought *Jagimeister* - no relation to *Jagermeister* - to the crease, leaving the former Torrance combo to rebuild the innings, and that is what they did. Some clever running between the wickets by the pair saw the *Panthers* keep their run-rate at near enough a run-a-ball. But *Jagimeister* had enough, he wasn't hearing enough from the crowd, so he went big, VERY big, one HUGE 6.....and that was it, the crowd was buzzing, with the club mascot leading the way with the chants of "OOOIIIIIIIIII!!!!!!". This fuelled *Jagi* for another big hit, and what a wallop! This led to an even bigger roar of "OOOIIIIIIIIII!!!!!!". Crowd entertainment at its finest, but then, suddenly, this was put to an end as *Jagi* was given out LBW.

"This brought *Dr Uzzi* to join Murtaza at the crease, having to rebuild the innings again. They kept it in check with some good running and some odd boundaries here and there.

"Meanwhile off the field, a story had broken out. Amaan *Fakeali* told Zakir *Sinakey* that he was the one who made the phone call and stated Zakir should be rested for Friday. Shouts of 'Heavy SNAAAKE YAAAR', 'BROO YOU SNAKED ME! I thought we were boiz?!' were heard around the ground. Meanwhile, Murtaza carried on his batting form hitting some boundaries with *Dr Uzzi* rotating the strike. Both stayed not out scoring over a run-a-ball, seeing the team to a total of 129 for 2 in 18 overs.

"OOOIIIIIIIIII!!!!!!

"With 130 to chase in 18 overs, the *Panthers* looked to be in a good position, but as we know, it is never that easy. Captain *Cobra* opened the bowling with *The Haati* (Awace Ahmed) and the newly *Gucci*-sponsored Amaan Ali. It looked as if *West* had been told to attack from the start, as the first ball from *The Haati* was whacked hard, straight down the

ground, only for a running dive from Irfan to stop it. He appeared to take the catch only for the ball to pop out of his hands once he hit the ground. 'What a dive, that would have been a heavy sick catch, yaar', was echoed by the team. *West* continued their attacking play, several edges resulting in 2s and a dropped catch at point, only for *The Haati* to get the breakthrough, taking out the dangerous Mills. *Ali Ali* was taken off and he threw a mini-tantrum not wanting to field, so MI Hanif switched him with *Dr Uzzi* so he could 'keep and vent his frustration at the opposition.

"Then, bowling changes of Hasan Syed and Abdullah Malik didn't work, with Abdullah keeping it steady, but his partner leaking runs.

"The bowlers were not helped by *The Haati*: despite his size, he was never agile enough to stop anything coming across his path. But something unusual was seen on the day: a dive from the big man! OOOIIII!!!! But was it stopped? Nope, the ball, nearly trapped under his smelly armpit, put up a fight and rolled away. He then came out with, 'Here that ball did a heavy u-turn, spun this way, then went that way', after another fielding effort slipped by him. In the extras section, there should now be an Awace Ahmed column so we can tally up the misfields.

"Another bowling change then saw *Bogezy Malone* brought in to the attack: first ball, goes straight to the 'keeper, no-one appeals apart from the *Bogezy* himself, and - WOOAH!!! - IT'S GIVEN! Batsman adamant he hadn't hit it, most people thought pad, but never ever underestimate the *Bogezy* appeal. Leggat gone for 33.

"*Bogezy's* overs were tight and he bowled four on the trot, with Murtaza coming on for three at the other end. In the midst of all of this, *West of Scotland* were now ahead of the game, running hard 1s and 2s. Some poor fielding also resulted in them going at more than a run-a-ball. Fielders were brought in to tighten up on the singles being run, yet still runs were leaking. Murtaza was then taken off, replaced by *Afghan Jalebi* (Habib). *Jalebi's* over kept the opposition in check along with Hunnain's last over: better, tighter, fielding. The *Panthers* took a crucial wicket near the dying stages of the game, with the *West* Captain Deshmukh chipping it in the air for *Umar Gul-fam* running in from deep cover taking the catch like a crocodile.

"With Hunnain's four great overs, it was left to Habib to give the *Panthers* the best possible chance of winning in the final over. 12 needed from twelve balls and *Jalebi Saab* goes for 6 in the seventeenth: dots, singles and twos. A good penultimate over, as the *Panthers* intentionally got the new batsman on strike for the final over: 6 needed from six. Not an ideal scenario, but the *Panthers* were still in the game. Question was, who would bowl the last over? The *Cobra* had two realistic options, himself with the toe crushing yorkers, or *Dr Uzzi* with bundles of experience. Captain knows best,.....*Dr Uzzi* to bowl.

"First ball...dot. Second ball...dot. Third ball...again...dot. Sounds a bit like *Slownnain* batting now doesn't it!. Fourth ball...edged to the 'keeper but is it taken?! Yes! Ali Ali doesn't do a *Slappy* and finally a 'keeper actually takes a catch for *Panthers*!! Fifth ball...batsman gets bat on ball, it passes through backward square-leg and somehow *West* manage to get 3! Last ball of the over, *West* needing 3 runs to win, a couple of fielders out to the boundary just to be safe, *Uzzi* bowls, and it's a dot ball!!! *Panthers* have won! They're celebrating!

"But,...hold on, WIDE BALL is called by the umpire! Drama!!

"*West of Scotland* now need 1 run to win the game, scores now tied with the wide and the sneaky single that was taken while the celebrations were ongoing! *West's* "Overseas Amateur" is back on strike too! 1 run needed and things now back in *West's* favour! But it was here *Panthers* turned into *Pythons* and were ready strike: all fielders in tight on the single, saving that 1 run, that 1 run that could change everything. *Dr Uzzi* comes in to bowl,

'10 runs' in the field. This was shot down instantly with venom by the other two snakes as they were quick to realise *Bogezy Malone* dropped a catch at slips. Another incident appeared on the sidelines with *Umar Gul-fam* claiming his dropped catch was a 'bump' ball, only for *Dr Uzzi* to respond with a shake of the head and a blunt 'No.' Another myth busted. *Black Mamba Snr.* took Murtaza's wicket, putting *Faux-een Ali* and *Dr Uzzi* in the middle with a job to do. 17 runs were needed off the last three overs. *Dr Uzzi* added 5 runs before he was bowled by *Murray Mints* spin, replaced by Ali mid-way through the nineteenth over with a few still required. After a wild stroke facing his first ball, *Adder Maddock* connected with the next couple to slither for singles with Awais. As they entered the final over – from Malik again – the *Panthers* were on 104, still 5 short. 2 from Ali, and then another 2. Scores tied. Ball hit to cover – no run likely – but a fumble by the fielder! Ali shouted for a run and made it to the other end, but Awais, far enough down the track, failed to ground his bat and was run out. In came Awace, with Captain's instructions to run, whatever happened, as the *Panthers* had more wickets left than balls left to face. Malik's next (and only) delivery to Awace: a wide! The *Panthers* were over the line with two balls to spare."

Panthers win at Prestwick in a game of 100s of runs! [posted 02/07/17]

Here's the Panthers' insider's view on today's win down at Prestwick. "On Sunday afternoon, the *Panthers* slithered their way down the A77 to Prestwick, under foreboding skies – the dark grey clouds and light showers not looking particularly conducive to cricket. The side was full of *Panthers* regulars, with one debutant in the shape of Murtaza Syed, who had just joined the club from Torrance, *Usmanaconda* claims he lured the debutant, however, news has come out that *Slappy* was looking to move to Torrance, but they did not want the biggest snake in the Western District at the club. The *King Cobra*, more punctual than most of his team, leading from the front as usual, unlike *Bogeyman* Hunnain a.k.a. *Bogez*, who is known to be late due to bowel problems, however this time he did not blame diarrhoea, but he did arrive with a bottle of water indicating...it had struck again!

"Having lost the toss. The home side elected to bat first on a dry wicket which looked like it had a bit to offer the bowlers. The *Pythong* opened with *Aghan Habibi (jaleb)* and Awace, who kept things relatively controlled once Habib had found his line after a few early wides. The Prestwick openers, Kennedy and Smith (the latter the Overseas Amateur) put on an first-wicket partnership of 67 before the former was run out for 10.

"This set the pattern for the first innings: partners coming and going as Smith kept racking up runs in the middle. It's worth noting, unfortunately for *Moeen Ali*, that he dropped Smith early in his innings after a thick edge off Awace's bowling to gully. Even more unfortunately, it was a dolly which really should have been held. Zakir *Sinkaey* (Siddiqui) was brought into the attack to bowl some 'GAAAAAAAASSS', which is apparently his new thing. Unfortunately, it proved somewhat expensive, with his only over going for 18. He was immediately swapped for another Zakir – *Dr Uzzi* – who got things back under a semblance of control with the *King Cobra* bowling back-to-back maidens which led to the run out. *Bogezy Malone* tried his best *Adder Maddock* impression by juggling the ball and dropping it, but to his disbelief he held onto the catch to take the second wicket (with the wicket keeper looking in awe thinking 'I wish I could catch').

"Some spin was introduced to the mix in the shape of Murtaza, followed by the *Malone Brothers* of *Bogezy Malone* and *Bugzy Malone*. Murtaza went on to be the pick of the bowlers, finishing with 8-2-33-4, his spin bamboozling the Prestwick batters for a good while until they (sort of) figured him out. The rest of the home batting lineup didn't offer many runs – only McGregor's 28 was notable – but they did offer some strike rotation for Smith, who went on to make a big 100. When he eventually departed late in the innings, caught by Murtaza off *Dr Uzzi*, he'd amassed an impressive 143. There was some hope the *Panthers* might bowl their hosts out, but it wasn't to be. They finished on 248, nine down. The *Panthers* will rue a few things from the first innings: a real dip in fielding and concentration in the final third of the innings; dropped catches (as well as Awais dropping Smith at gully, Ali put down a half-chance at short backward point, while Zakir OOOAAAAAYY!!! ran away from the ball when it

came to him in the air shouting OH BHAS KHAR!!); and some bowling expense in the shape of wides and leaky overs from *Abduallah Spinaj* and Hunnain (who the Captain tried to bail out by running from mid-on and doing a full stretched dive to catch the ball which was whacked straight. All this resulted in was a boundary and a bruised middle finger which the *Cobra* rightfully showed to the bowler). A run a ball, more or less, was the target for the *Panthers* batsmen.

"After the innings break, *Slow-nain* and Murtaza got padded up to open. One tried his hardest to lose the game, the other however, did his absolute best to win it on his debut. *Slow-nain* racking up the dots and living up to his name of dot-to-dot from last season kept on hitting the ball to the fielders, most runs coming from misfields, even then he was reluctant to run for the 1s and 2s until Murtaza was practically at Hunnain's end forcing him to run. Hunnain played wingman to Murtaza, amassing 60 runs from 90 balls or so (yeah that's right!) before being adjudged plumb LBW by a moonlighting ICC Umpire. Zakir *Sinakey* and *Minaj-e-Pakistan* were at the sidelines 'talking da hardest' with *Afghan Habibi* trying to show the Captain Irfan on how to he should be up the order with him middling the edges. But now it was their time to shine *Abdullah Kardashian* came in at three, but very quickly came out again, as he departed for just 2 runs. *Professor Slappyconda* came to the crease and looked to be an effective partner for Murtaza as they chased down the target, which by now was well within sight, complicated somewhat by Syed's departure for 122, with the team on 222. An academic twosome of *The Professor* and *Dr Uzzi* kept the *Panthers* on pace for the finish line until the former threw a spanner in the works as in typical snakey style was bowled for 16 making the game difficult for his team with the scores (thought to be) tied with three balls left. Awace's first ball, off Smith's off-spin: dot. His second ball: straight back down the ground for 4. The *Panthers* had won with a ball to spare. Today, to quote *Master Spinaj*, was *the day*."

Greenwood Trophy win [posted 22/06/17]

Scott Ellis Fields was the venue for tonight's second round Greenwood Trophy clash between the *Panthers* and Kilmarnock. In the field first, the *Panthers* started well, restricting their hosts to 47 for 2 at the halfway point. Humza Sabri had, in particular, bowled tightly, his first three overs costing just 9 runs. At the other end, Abdul was troubling the batters with extra pace, and bounce, but was actually far less economical as batters got bat on ball to see edges race for a couple of boundaries behind the wicket. The two wickets that had fallen had seen Flanagan adjudged LBW and Ahmed caught by Irfan. The containment of the home side's run-rate continued beyond the mid-point too,.....at least until the fourteenth over. Sixteen overs gone and Kilmarnock were 71 for 3, Ali having been run out by Humza. However three overs later - almost incredibly - *Killie* were 132 for 3, overs fourteen, fifteen and sixteen costing 24, 18 and 19 respectively. Ouch! So instead of thinking they might be chasing a run-a-ball come the second innings, the *Panthers* were now thinking 8-an-over was more likely. And so it was. 161 was posted, and a decent run-chase would be needed. 31 runs in extras didn't help the cause it has to be noted too!

To the *Panthers'* reply. Humza and Uzzair opened, and were positive from start. Humza would depart first - 13 for 1 - in the third over however, bringing Abdul to the middle. He and Uzzair continued the positive start, and added 69 for the second wicket, in 6.4 overs. Uzzair was moving along nicely at a run-a-ball, Abdul was more brutal, his 52 coming from just 31 deliveries, and including four 4s and two 6s. He *was*, however, given a life when he was dropped in the deep, as well as surviving a big appeal for caught behind. But he was the second batter out, caught by Flanagan after mis-cuing one. *Rambo* then joined Uzzair, and these two - used to batting together in junior cricket - continued the onslaught. They'd add another 69 for the third wicket, all-but seeing the side home, before being separated in the seventeenth over with only 11 runs needed for the win. Uzzair it was who departed, caught and bowled for 40 (38). *Rambo* couldn't quite hang around until the win was secured either, being fifth out with 4 runs still required, caught for 33 (25). But the win was secured four balls later, and the *Panthers* had won by five wickets, and progress in the competition.

A match that should have been won [posted 28/05/17]

Irfan Hanif reports, "The Poloc *Pythons* were hosting Weirs on a wonderful Sunday afternoon. The *Pythons* XI wasn't really confirmed until the last moment. A lot of confusion here and there. *Bogeyman* was still recovering after yesterday's antics at Prestwick and called off at the last moment. *Slappy* didn't know if he was playing as he broke his fingernail at Prestwick as he did that "hand thing, you know...the point" when 'keeping. Captain *Cobra* was running out of options, so he brought Amaan Ali out of retirement and had Zakir *Sinakey* waiting on the sidelines, but no, *Usamanaconda* confirms last minute after going to A. & E. that he would be available, thus making Zakir *Sinakey* twelfth man and bringing on the drinks.

"The *Pythons* lost the toss and were sent out to field. This led to the extras duo *Afghan' Jalebi* (Habib) and Faizan to open the bowling. Habib, during the month of Ramadan wanted to be more generous than his usual self, and thought he'd give the opposition the best chance of winning by bowling one or two extra overs with his wides. Faizan tried to join him with first first over, out-gifting Habib, but could not keep it up as he ended up taking a wicket and said to the *Cobra* "take me off". Weirs were sitting at 70 for 1 after just seven overs.

"This led to the much anticipated return of Amaan Ali who was joined by *Umar Gul-fam*. Both dried up the extras and bowled with a lot more discipline, however Weirs were enjoying the pace on the ball as they were middling their edges, resulting in boundaries. The *Pythons* looked at the scoreboard and it read 120 for after fifteen overs, resulting in a big hissssss.

"The *Cobra* introduced spin by throwing the ball to the debutant Awace Ahmed who was confused, asking the captain "What do I bowl? Pace, off-spin, leg-spin or under-arm?". The answer was off-spin. Awace's often used as a sparring partner in the nets, the *King Cobra* turning him from a seamer into an offy, and *Mr. Khatarnaak* repaid the favour by racking up the dots in his first over. His tag team partner Abdullah *Minaj-e-Pakistan* (also known as the tourist attraction *Minar-e-Pakistan* in Lahore), bowled in tandem, drying up the runs and taking wickets. With the pressure building up, wickets were tumbling, two for Awace, and two for Abdullah. The score was at 145 for 5 after 25 overs.

"Momentum was building, the *Pythons* were closing in with an attacking field. Weirs were unable to keep up with the *Kardashian* (Abdullah), who went on the rampage, getting the batsman to play and chip it, which resulted in....dropped catches, and several [allegedly] "plumb" LBW appeals being turned down. Three wicket-taking balls were bowled back to back, one was dropped by the *King Cobra*, who was distracted by another snake in his territory, looming at the other side of the boundary, a snake who recently moved to GHK...the snake had his "hood up", only to be revealed later on as *Ghussa* (Hasan). Next ball...a huge LBW appeal, but not given?! Third ball is chipped in the air and Faizan does a random sideways roll, but there is a ball in his hand, A catch has been taken!

"Abdullah, closing in on his 5-for, then clean bowls another batsman, the *Pythons* were sensing it..."Today is the day". Bowling well, close shaves here and there, the batsman getting rattled by the snakes ends up smashing one down the ground, only for Irfan to take a stunning catch, the *Pythons* started to slither in celebration...but "No ball!" is the call from the umpire! The reaction from the fielding team is unprintable.

"So the *Panthers* had pulled it back with Awace and Abdullah doing the most damage. Weirs 165 for 7 in 28 overs. *Panthers Moeen Ali* (Awais Ramzan) was introduced who was using this as a warm up game for the ICC Champions Trophy, experimenting with bowling on the pitch, off the pitch, and making the ball roll to the 'keeper. This resulted in not so generous figures and a bumping up of the Weirs score. Experimentation over.

"The *King Cobra* and *Umar Gul-fam* were brought on to finish off the innings, both bowling to plan, and giving them three wickets between them, superb death bowling from Irfan leaving him with two wickets.

"But the *Pythons* did not really know what they were chasing having looked at the Weirs scorebook, where four different totals appeared. In the end Weirs decided the *Pythons* required 205 to win.

"The team gave Zakir *Sinakey* a courtesy call and advised that drinks and tea were not needed due to nearly everyone fasting and to just rest at home.

"Having restricted Weirs to 204, *Slappy* and the *Goatee* (Amaan Ali) were sent out to bat. Going along fine with the score on 40 for 0 after ten overs, the struggling *Goatee* then got out to a superb in-swinging ball that hit middle stump. This brought *Rambo Scotland* to the crease, who was quiet for his standards, and was maybe hourse from shouting "Shot boooY!!!" at Prestwick. Both *Slappy* and *Rambo* were going along at a nice rate of 4 or 5 an over, keeping the scoreboard ticking over with 1s and 2s and the odd boundary. This looked to be a solid foundation being built, and they were at 80 for 1 after eighteen overs.

"*Slappy* then decided to take on the Weirs Captain and slapped him around for a couple of 4s and a 6, looking to up the ante. However, Weirs secret weapon Zohaib Qayyum came on to bowl, and took out Scotland with a great ball leaving *Rambo* disappointed in himself stating "That was some bouncer", after him getting out to a yorker. But the *Pythons* were still in the game, at 105 for 2 after twenty overs, and with some strong batting to come.

"*Rambo's* wicket brought out *Dr. Uzzi* (who was wicket keeping to an excellent standard). With both Usamanacondas at the crease the game was looking to be in good shape. But no, *Slappy* being his usual self decided to pull a snake move, deciding to get himself run out at an important stage of the game, and then realising that he was on 49, which resulted in some serious rage and a tantrum thrown: the snake had been snaked. His excuse was, "My bat was grounded, I was well inside my crease, the umpire that gave it out was standing at third man". And to be fair to *Slappy*, unlike previous times, he was actually indeed correct for once.

"Moments later, there was a small appeal. "Not out" stated everyone in the dressing room. *Dr. Uzzi* was out! What for? The opposition were dumbstruck too, and asked the umpire the question. He advised caught behind, but the ball struck *Dr. Uzzi* high above the thigh. The non-striking batsman therefore posed the same question, the umpire replying this time, "I don't know". The *Panthers* were starting to realise "Today wasn't the day".

"Zohaib Qayyum then gained in confidence and took some quick wickets: Irfan, Faizan and Abdullah all departed in quick succession due to some excellent bowling. This left *Mr. Khatarnaak* on his true *Panthers* debut holding the innings together with a quickfire 25, but just like in the friendly against West of Scotland, he was dropped a couple of times. Speaking of dropped, Weirs placed a fielder at mid-off who, like Habib, was generous and dropped four catches off throughout the innings, in the same position. However, with no support, Awace couldn't use his clever batting to good use as he ran out of partners and finished 25 not out.

"The *Panthers* therefore sunk to defeat, a first loss of the season which shouldn't have been. Some strange scoring, umpiring and lack of support from the tail ended their winning streak. Even though Habib was being generous, the scorebook reported 60-plus extras, with over 50 of them being wides?!?

"So a good all round effort from the team, with a good comeback to restrict the opposition in the first innings, in vain. Leeping the *Booger* out of the team, the extras count, and catching still appear, however, to be an issue alongwith the tail not wagging. Notable performances were *Slappy* scoring 49 with the bat, Abdullah and Irfan with the ball, and a *Khatarnaak* debut for Awace with two wickets and 25*. Today however, wasn't the day."

"**This is *the day!***" [posted 18/05/17]

"Oh bus khar!!! Today...is *the day*" These were the words uttered by the wannabe Vice-Captain Abdullah Malik (*the Iron Dome*) who was making his return to *the Panthers* eleven tonight. So was today *the day*? *The day* started off with glorious sunshine and *the Panthers* were hosting BBC Scotland in the Greenwood Trophy. *The King Cobra* went to toss and, as you would expect, he lost. He did try a Hasan Rafiq (*Ghussa*), i.e. persuade the opposition captain to let *the Panthers* bat first by saying 'Oh bus Khardi, yaar! Let us bat, yaar! Today is *the day*!'. The other captain somehow comprehended Abudallah's language and chose to bowl letting *the Panthers* bat first.

"The team had seen some last minute changes with Faizan and *Dr. Uzzi* calling off only to be replaced by the snakes known as *SoBoa Constrictor* and *Uzzair Shahnake*. In other news, *Zakir Sinakey* made his *Panthers* debut, and just before the batters went out, Captain Irfan handed Zakir his well earned T20 *Panthers* cap. *Sobo* and *Abdullah Kardashian* went out to open the innings for *the Panthers*. It was a slow start, with Abdullah departing for 1 with an LBW, only to dispute it, asserting 'it was going down leg side, yaaar'. His opening partner *Soboa Constrictor* soon followed, constricting himself by making 5 from twelve, and eventually top-edging one. This brought out *Mr. Rambo Scotland* to the crease to join *Uzzair Shahnake*. Both took their time seeing off the *Beeb's* best bowler, David Blane, the magician, and Indrajit Kar. Surviving the new ball, and some good bowling, they kept the scoreboard ticking over with singles however. Once the *Beeb* bowled out their opening bowlers, *the Panthers* were only sitting at 36 for 2 after eight overs. *The Panthers* team, however, were not worried, in the dugout they were constantly reminded by Abdullah that 'Today...is *the day*'. This message was uttered on a regular basis by the hyper Abdullah, and the whole team became motivated to find out just what on earth this actually meant. Back to the game: at one point, after only batting three or four overs *Rambo Scotland* wanted a change of gloves. Why? He just wanted to hear 'Today is *the day*' up close to give him a peace of mind that all would be well. The Captain gave him the replacement gloves, and advised him to pass on Abdullah's inspirational quote to his batting partner. And what do you know...*the Panthers* run-rate started to accelerate; they had hope after the wonderful quote. It was sensible batting by *Rambo Scotland* and *Uzzair Shahnake* as they ran singles and scored a boundary every over. *The Panthers* were now up to 74 for 2 after twelve overs. Zohaib Qayyum then, however, momentarily, put a stop to the good batting by only going for 1 run in the thirteenth over. But, the batsmen knew, 'Today is *the day*.'

"From the fourteenth over on-wards, only five dot balls were played by *Rambo Scotland* and *Uzzair Shahnake*, both making excellent 50s and punishing the bowling while still getting the crucial 1s and 2s from the good balls. Both finished not out, with *Rambo* 80* and *Uzzair* 73* letting *the Panthers* post 177.

"The bowling was led by *Yasir Shah* (Habib), who thought he'd bowl some pace, and Gulfam his opening partner. Habib started off with his usual generosity giving away 4 wides in his first over. With the high total in mind, the *Beeb* opening pair were taking on the pace attack, hitting lots of lofted shots. This caused a change in the field by Captain Irfan, bringing *Zakir Sinakey* out of second slip and placing him at extra cover. Putting the pressure on him as a result, the batter went for a big shot again; another skier; and it dropped to the man at cover, none other than the man who wisely prophesied 'Today is *the day*', *Abdullah Minaj* taking the catch off of Gulfam's bowling. As the batters kept slashing away at the pace bowling and with the score having raced to 44 for 1 in just four overs, spin was introduced. *Hunnain The Bogeyman* appeared, much to the disgust of the opposition as well as those standing at mid-on and mid-off. *The Booger* kept the run-rate in check in his first over, which led to Abdullah, the man of the moment, coming on from the other end. Abdullah added pressure onto the batsmen, following *Hunnain's* over, and got *The Magician David Blane* to nick one to the 'keeper, *Ishant Sharma* (Graeme). This caused the whole of Poloc to go wild, Abdullah knew, *the Panthers* knew, Poloc knew...today was indeed *the day*!

"*The Bogeyman* returned next over, with his slimy one appearing, using his secret weapon to put the batsman off his game. Varghese Jose took his anger out and lashed at *the*

Bogeyman's delivery, only for it to be held at long-off by the forever smiling Habib. However, his smile disappeared once he seen what was brewing in Hunnain's nostrils, leading to no team huddle for this wicket, everyone staying rooted to their fielding positions. Hunnain, using the pressure built by the spinners trapped Indrajit Kar LBW, after a *huuuuuuuuuuge* appeal by Hunnain,.....but no-one else. But the umpire gave it! Yes, the umpire raised his finger as quickly as possible so he could get Hunnain to turn away from him, *the Bogey* forever growing in confidence. The *Beeb* were now on the back-foot, the score at 58 for 4. They hit back though in Hunnain's and Abdullah's next overs, as these went for 23 (a number reserved for Shaan Khan) in two overs, pushing the visitors' score up to 81 for 4. The debutant *Zakir Sinakey* was brought on, adding to *the Beeb's* fear with his aggression, along with partner-in-crime *Soboa Constrictor*. Keeping runs to a minimum led to the dangerous Zohaib Qayyum skying one. It looked as if it was going to land in no man's land, but no, Abdullah, the hero, ran from point all the way to fine leg to taking a superb catch, in style, and with a slide. Abdullah stunned, not knowing what he done, looked at his whole team and then to the Captain, holding the ball in the air shouting 'Today is *the day!*'. Wickets started to tumble at this juncture, with the pressure on, and with Zakir and *Soboa* bowling well. Three wickets fell in two overs, and *the Beeb* were now teetering on 91 for 7. Zakir got his first wicket for *the Panthers* as one was chipped to *Adder Maddock* at short mid-wicket. Zakir, elated, ran a lap of the ground like Imran Tahir, resulting in him being called.....*Imran Zakir*, for the rest of the game. *Soboa* then bowled out Jack McGill with his wannabe spin bowling, claiming it 'spun from outside off, yaar, and came in'. The whole team disagreed, having witnessed a straight full toss. This led to *SoBoa* getting frustrated and taking another wicket in his over, with a caught and bowled. Habib came back into the attack to finish things off. Unfortunately, *Rambo Scotland* had other ideas. Not only did he want to be a hero at the end of the first innings, finishing 80*, he thought he'd be a hero again at the end of the second too, finishing it off with a run out. Game over, BBC Scotland bowled out for 111 in 18.2 overs, and *the Panthers* win by 66 runs. *The Panthers* could have finished the game off earlier if less extras had been given, and catches had been taken. *Zakir Sinakey* still has a lot to learn, getting a *Panthers* saying of 'A dot ball is a hot ball' (coined by none other than Abdullah) so wrong, shouting 'A good ball is a dot ball' instead?!? Post-match the team spoke to Abdullah and questioned why he thought 'Today was *the day*'. Simple response: '*Usmanaconda* wasn't wicket keeping today bro', dats vy, yaar". A solid win for *the Panthers* unit."

***Panthers* winning streak continues [posted 09/05/17]**

Ali and Irfan again report, "After two successful Sunday adventures, *the Panthers* kicked off their campaign in the Evening League at home to Renfrew. On another pleasant, intermittently sunny evening at Shawholm, Irfan reverted to form and lost the toss, his opposite number opting to bat first. Taimoor and Gulfam opened the bowling, both relatively controlled, which was pleasing after Sunday's many wayward balls against Torrance Community. However, *Slappy* Amin, behind the stumps, looked to be embarking upon his usual antics as he let the first ball go for 5 wides. *The Panthers* felt aggrieved not to run out Majeed, the young opener whom Taimoor was cruelly bouncing on a semi-regular basis, early on, but the square-leg umpire's finger stayed steadfastly unraised. This provoked some consternation in *the Panthers* ranks, with *Slappy* contradictorily taking off his gloves while also trying to start a boxing match. Soon after, however, Alam, the other opener, was run out for 14 by a smart throw from Taimoor. His shy looked to be a direct hit, only for *Usmanaconda* to try and take the glory by flicking the ball on to the stumps: a snake move indeed. Majeed (6) didn't last much longer after his first near-miss, with Ali taking a high catch at square leg off Habib's similarly tight bowling to send him back to the pavilion.

"Wickets continued to fall; Reddy ended up with 18* as a succession of partners came and went, with only Mullen (31*) contributing significantly to the Renfrew total of 106. Mullen's impressive batting (including three 6s and three 4s) deserves special mention, especially as he was apparently plucked out of the crowd to have a bat after arriving to merely spectate after work! *The Panthers* (including *King Cobra*, who foolishly gave himself a bowl for the final over) let 32 go off the last twelve balls, which, aside from the odd fielding error, was the

only real negative in a solid first innings performance. Habib ended with a well-deserved 4-for; *Bogeyman* (Hunnain) and Gulfam also bagged one each, the latter's wicket coming as *Slappy* redeemed himself with an outrageous catch, diving full length to his right to make the ball just stick in his glove and no more. *Slappy* was so shocked that he ran straight to the Captain, *King Cobra*, asking if he was dreaming. The rest of the team were similarly disbelieving - Gulfam, entirely reasonably, assumed the ball had gone through the keeper for 4.

"After a short hiatus, and one of Irfan's moderately rousing team talks, *the Panthers* headed out to chase 107 for victory. The result never truly looked in doubt, although there was a steady turnover of batters, who all contributed something to the innings. Faizan, opening, hit six 4s on his way to 26 before he edged one to the 'keeper - insisting, on his return to the pavilion, that he didn't nick the ball. Umpire *Pasty* was later heard to opine that the heavy wooden noise, and the large change in the ball's trajectory, may have suggested otherwise! Taimoor joined the *Black Mamba (Ihty)* in the middle; *Ihty* managed 31 before he was caught, bringing in Ali Maddock, the the star man promoted up the order for his no-nonsense big hitting. That pairing nearly finished things off, Ali hitting singles to get Taimoor back on strike, but the latter got out - plum LBW - for 32 with only a few runs left to chase. The incoming *Professor Slappy* (2*) and Ali (4*) then did the needful, getting *the Panthers* over the line inside 13 overs.

"A decent start to the Evening League for *the Panthers*, then, and it was pleasing to see some of the previous errors begin to be corrected – especially in the extras column. The next clash in the League might be a bit tastier – *the Panthers* are away - at Shawholm - to the *Poloc Academy*...."

Unprecedented! [posted 07/05/17]

Ali and Irfan report, "In an almost unheard of development, the *Panthers* have managed to play two Sunday games in a season – and it's still only early May! Torrance Community CC were their opponents, visiting from the north side of the city for a 40-over friendly contest in sky-splitting sunshine at Shawholm. Irfan won the toss [Ed: which makes a change!] and elected to bat first on the pitch Poloc had used the preceding day. *Sobo* and Abdullah opened; the former made a solid 39, but the latter struggled to get in, eventually going for 8. This brought in *Rambo Scotland*, whose innings of 82 was the standout performance for the home side, ably backed by *Slappy* who added to last week's century at *Toytown* with another half ton of 53. The less said about the next batter – Ali going for a second-ball duck after he missed a yorker which caught him on the back foot, plum LBW – the better, but that made way for a proper doctor, *Uzzi*, to steady the ship with a useful 26 before he was caught. Captain *King Cobra* (Irfan) then came in to show Abdullah *Kardashian* how to hit a quick fire 8. The rest of the lower order - Hunnain (5), Gulfam (0*) and Faizan (4*) – chipped in to make sure the *Panthers* used their full overs allocation, with a special mention for Faizan who went in to face one ball with no pads on, achieving a strike rate of 400! The *Panthers* total on the scoreboard after 40 overs: an eminently defensible 264.

"After both teams made an excellent effort hoovering up all the food on offer at tea, minimising the tidying up, Torrance opened with DeBrincat and Wani. Early in the innings, it seemed that there was likely to be a standout top scorer for Torrance.....extras. Habib, opening from the Burrell End, struggled to control the new ball and conceded multiple wides, with Faizan suffering a similar, but less severe, fate. This led to Irfan bringing himself on to add some control and reduce the wides, ably doing so with a maiden in his second over. He also employed *Dr Uzzi's* controlled medium pace to keep the extras column tidier. Torrance's openers only made 30 between them, but by the time DeBrincat (12) was expertly bowled by Faizan, the scoreboard already read 58 due to the wayward bowling. The wickets slowly trickled over; Wani (18) was run out by Ali, partially atoning for his duck with a smart throw to the 'keeper, while Mortaza (23) suffered a similar fate when *Ihty the Black Mamba*, fielding as a sub', smashed the stumps with a direct hit! Abdullah *Minaj* grabbed a smart catch on the slide after Hassan skied one of Gulfam's deliveries, followed by a period of frustration for

the *Panthers* as Torrance's two top scorers, Cooper and Tariq, put on 39 and 52 respectively. Although they batted well, scoreboard pressure was mounting on the visitors, with the required run-rate creeping up, and Irfan's field featuring progressively more men on the boundary each over. Cooper was caught by *Slappy*, who finally managed to make one stick in his gloves after several missed chances - his teammates wondering if he was pushing for the most drops in an innings. The shock on *Usmanaconda's* face when he finally caught one told its own story! Tariq's half century was ended by a run out as the batters tried to eke out every last run in the closing stages. The last man in, Aman, added 20* but Torrance couldn't quite catch their hosts, ending on 255.

"The game was an enjoyable, competitive affair but there are clearly a few items on the agenda for the next *Panthers* team meeting. The top item is getting control of the new (and old) ball – the 53 conceded in wides speak for themselves. Other matters arising include consistency in the batting lineup, especially 'getting in' further down the order, and the over rate – although obviously not aided by the extras, both teams took well over three hours to finish their allotted 40. Some bigger, stickier gloves for *Slappy* behind the stumps might also be of utility in keeping the wickets tumbling. On the plus side, the fielding was better than last weeks, with fewer errors conceding runs, and the occasional dropped catches all being difficult chances. Above all, however, a win's a win; and the *Panthers* march onwards to their opening Evening League match on Tuesday."

Panthers secure derby day win [posted 30/04/17]

Ali Maddock reports, "The *Panthers'* Sunday League campaign started three weeks earlier than planned, with a rescheduled trip to *Toytown* to face local rivals Clydesdale's *Cavaliers* side. The sun was shining intermittently through the clouds, but it was definitely April, as the cold blustery wind made things increasingly unpleasant in the field as the day went on.

"Captain Irfan continued previous seasons' form and lost the toss; *Dale* elected to bat on a greenish, flat pitch towards the *Hutchie* side of the ground. Their openers blew hot and cold - Scobie worked hard for his relatively quick 30 runs, while Haq, who eventually got 16, took a long time to amass them. When Scobie did depart, bowled by Noaman, he was followed immediately back to the pavilion by Shoukat, giving Noaman a hat-trick ball. Despite a couple of extra slips, said ball was deftly seen off by the incoming batsman, but it was nonetheless the highlight of a good spell of bowling from Noaman to keep the *Dark Side's* upper order on their toes. Although everyone in the Clydesdale side contributed runs, no one truly 'got in' – their high scorer, Chitnas, got himself to 38 before he skied a Gulfam ball to long leg. Ali Maddock, sprinting round from deep square, managed to take the catch – and more importantly, keep his feet inside the boundary rope. Similarly, there were decent catches held by Faizan (taking a debut wicket for Poloc, with an athletic grab above head height for a caught and bowled) and Noaman, off Habib, who (like Faizan) bagged a couple bowling on Poloc debut. Hunnain, despite going for too many in his first over, kept things tight thereafter, with Abdullah at the other end. The Rafiq(ue) twins bowled well with *Ghoosa* (Hasan) bowling a maiden, reflecting his general economy, while Gulfam was also solid, taking the wicket of the highest scorer. Alongside these positives, the *Panthers* have plenty to work on in the field, with a couple of dropped catches, and far too many extras – especially the 32 runs conceded in wides! Clydesdale, in the end, managed 236 for 9, though Poloc will feel they should have ended the innings a few overs earlier. Credit is however due to the two tail-enders, who batted sensibly to see out the full 40.

"237 the target, then, and it looked achievable, if everyone kept their heads and 'got in' – or so went the team-talk, prior to an excellent tea. It looked as if the sound advice from the Captain, Irfan, had actually got into the heads of the openers - his advice being not to look at the scoreboard too much, and play their natural game with good running. In the end, it only took two batsmen to do the needful, as the dot to dot twins 'Slappy' Usman Amin and 'Anime' Hunnain carried their bats. *Slappy* was the stand-out, scoring 129*, finally living up to his name and slapping the ball to cow corner on a consistent basis but ably backed by Hunnain (85*) who batted with a big boogie throughout the innings. The chase was completed in the

27th over, sparing everyone at least an hour in the biting wind. Having only managed to play a couple of Sunday League ties last season, it was good for the *Panthers* to get a solid, early-season win under their belts in the longer format of the game. It should, however, hopefully inspire some work at training – especially in taking high catches and learning where the wide marks are on the pitch.

"The Captain's away win record continues..."