

CRICKET MATCH REPORTS

Round 10: ISA Cricket 2nds St. Pius X defeated St. Gregory's College

Last Saturday, the St Pius Second XI travelled to Campbelltown face the fourth placed St Gregory's First XI. A google maps malfunction made the oval hard to find, but Vice-captain Alex Graffeo won the toss and elected to bat, in the early absence of the captain. The oval had suffered a burst water pipe just next to the wicket and meant a new pitch had to be prepared on Thursday. The wicket looked very green and looked to stay low, but it played extremely well with good bounce and some early life.

The St Pius openers made a very strong start, and was only broken when Alex Graffeo (14 retired hurt) badly rolled his ankle, which forced him out of the game. The other opener, Tom Ventura (64) continued on and put on good partnerships with Josh Rayner (13), Oscar Sheehan (25) and Jordan Furlan (9). It looked like St Pius would post a total close to 200, being 3/142, but a lower order collapse led to St Pius being bowled all out in the final over for 167, with resistance from Nick McLachlan (10).

After the lunch break, the St Greg's openers showed great intent early on, racing off to a good start. However the moment was slowed down by Nick Slack (1/17 off 6) and Dan Hall. But St Pius still looked to be in trouble despite Josh Rayner (1/13) bowling well. However, St Pius managed to turn the game around with excellent energy in the field provided by all, putting pressure on the batsmen. The spinners, Tom Ventura (5/33 off 10) and Oscar Sheehan (0/29 off 8) helped to create this pressure and were rewarded with wickets. But due to the see-saw nature of the game, the St Greg's batsmen rallied and looked on track to get the runs, but St Pius only needed three more wickets to win. These were all taken by Dan Hall (3/27 off 9) with an incredible second spell which saw St Greg's bowled all out for 156 off 43 overs, and giving St Pius a nail biting 11 run victory.

The win saw St Pius claim the minor premiership, and they will face St Greg's again at Oxford Falls next week in the semi-final. A highlight of the game was the outstanding team spirit and enthusiasm displayed by St Pius in the field.

Tom Ventura - Captain, 2nd XI

Minor Premiers 2016-17 - St Pius X 2nd XI

St Pius 2nd XI 9/167 defeated St Gregory's College 156 – Now the Minor Premiers

(T Ventura 64 & 5/33, O Sheehan 25, D Hall 3/27)

St Pius 2nd XI headed to Campbelltown top of the table for the last round of the competition, the record of 5 bonus point wins, 1 regular points win and 2 loses, as good as we have seen for many years. However cricket is a funny game, a win or a washout and we win the minor premiership, a loss and we lose it and risk an away semi-final. The final four were decided this weekend so close the competition has been between the 8 teams.

In winning the toss Vice-Captain Graffeo elected to bat, a confident decision from the opening batsman determined to set the tone and lead from the front. Unfortunately having raced to 16 he rolled his ankle and retired hurt.

As we have seen in recent games Captain Tom Ventura (64 runs) not only has his own game under control but knows how to work with his batting partners to squeeze every run from the pitch. Oscar Sheehan (25) shared a 43 run partnership with Ventura to form a solid base for the

lower order to attack from. The pitch offered spin and movement to the delight of our bowlers except whilst they batted, we managed to reach the 50th over but are still yet to complete it.

Clouds hung over lunch dropping slight hints of their intentions, again the stresses within a game of cricket emerge as the 30 over mark would be a dangerous place for St Pius to end the game. St Greg's came out fighting, the opening batsmen scored freely averaging 5 an over until Slack (6:3:1:17) got the big hitting Jaravani to edge one behind.

A period of awkwardness descended with St Pius slightly pegging back the run rate but with only 1 further wicket, courage was required as the bowling plan needed to be maintained, build pressure on St Greg's and protect plan B. A lot rode on the Sheehan/Ventura session and they didn't disappoint, Sheehan battling flu played support role as his captain stole 5/13 wickets in 4 overs(10:1:5:33). A sense of relief and potential joy emerged with plenty of talk on and off field creating atmosphere, a great game was unfolding.

However cricket is a funny game, with every over St Greg's collected runs, with every run, a drop of SPX potential joy evaporated. At the final drinks break the game was on a knife edge, St Pius needed 3 wickets to win the Minor premiership, St Gregs needed 43 runs to stay in the semi finals.

Dan Hall returned and snared the vital 8th wicket, the change of pace undoing the lower order hitter. But still they came...Another over from Hall another wicket but also another 4 runs, St Greg's were still well ahead on wet weather, they had plenty of overs and the run rate would see them home. After the game we joked we could have had a bonus point win in the 40th over, but it wasn't until, the spectators nails were bitten to the quick and Mr Listo's voice was hoarse, that finally Dan Hall(9:3:3:27) took his third and the team's tenth in the 43rd over to seal an 11 run victory.

The players were encouraged to enjoy the weekend as Minor Premiers of Div 2, a massive and well deserved achievement. On Monday we start our finals campaign, we have home ground advantage but that is all, everything else needs to come from the players themselves.

Mr A Slack