

XXIX Club tour to USA & Canada

by Steven McCooke

Philadelphia Cricket Festival

Game 1 & 2

Day 2 of the four day festival has been completed with the XXIXers winning two out of three so far with two more round matches to be played out tomorrow (Saturday). Sunday is 'finals day' and you have to head your group of six to qualify for the semis or be best placed second.

In the opening game yesterday at Evansburg at the British Officers Club (about 40 min bus ride from our hotel which is a 40 min train ride from main town Philadelphia) we defeated Colorado CC.

Batting first the XXIXers made a commendable 5/133 from the 20 overs. Stewart McCooke (24) and David O'Shaughnessy (18) got the team off to a good start putting on 46. Carl Nunan (18) kept things going. Steven McCooke (36) top scored and Glenn Hannah's 21 n.o. finished things off nicely.

Peter Leggett snaffled a bullet at point off the 2nd ball of Colorado's innings off the chairman Geoff Fidler. At 1/54 Stewart McCooke got an important breakthrough and went on to take a handy 3/16 off 3.1 whilst his 'old man' grabbed 2/16 off 4 (spin twins??).

Hannah & Leggett picked up one each and with two run outs that complemented some good fielding Colorado were out for 103 in the 19th.

Game 2 was 20 mins the other way from our hotel so after stopping off at Merion CC for lunch, a 2km walk to nearby Haverford College us XXIXers played Wandering Anzacs (US) in the late game. Bowling first, Carl Nunan took two of the earlier wickets and when Tim Fidler took a leaping catch we looked in the game at 3/54. Unfortunately we ran into a team with a bit more depth and, although a pretty college ground, it is on the side of a hill with an unusual boundary set up. The innings got away from us and we were set 164.

Stewart McCooke was best of the bowlers conceding just 17 off 4 overs then followed up with the bat, reaching the retirement score of 40, his innings including a couple of cracking 6s. Tim Fidler (21) batted nicely as did Peter Leggett (30) who added a lot of respectability to our score that ended up 44 short. A 'reluctant' Ian Bennett (4 n.o.) got on the board and Mike Reidy, whilst not off the mark, put in a huge effort behind the stumps in tricky conditions for wicket keepers with surrounds that didn't have perfect bounce. In short it was a positive day where the XXIX Club gave a good account of themselves.

Game 3

The XXIXers had one game scheduled day two and with predicted inclement weather that came to fruition, all matches were rescheduled to an indoor cricket facility at Haverford. Played to 10 over a side indoor cricket rules, our slightly conservative approach of hitting into the side net (1 run) combined with running a single (worth 2) so counts for 3 total. Reidy, O'Shaughnessy, Stewart McCooke, Nunan and Leggett all reached the compulsory 20 retirement and Hannah's last ball six has us finish on 153.

All 10 XXIXers bowled including Barry Anderson who took a wicket in his first ball - for 20 years! - and Tim Norton got the arm over. Not sure all the scoring worked but the XXIXers managed a 47 run win.

We look forward to back to back T20s tomorrow as the weather clears and 'having fun' - us being reminded by organisers that this is a Cricket FESTIVAL, not a tournament.

Game 4 & 5

Well, would you believe it, the XXIX Club go two from two on Saturday to finish four wins, one loss. The team that beat us Friday, the Wandering Anzacs, lost a match today to also finish 4:1 but head our group on the head to head result. It looks like our 2nd placing will get us the wild card berth in the semi-final tomorrow morning (9.00am Sunday Philly time, after tonight's banquet dinner!). More details to come but we played RAC from UK first this morning after a wet day and night. Conditions slippery, grass long, plenty of extras, on the side of a hill at Haverford College again, we hung in there to make 133 pretty much in tip and run style. I think they took us a bit easy. Tim Fidler took important wickets and with a solid effort in the field we bowled them out for around 78.

It was then back to Merion CC to play the locals. Quite different conditions. Beautiful flat, mown, outfield (normally 28 lawn tennis courts) but a bit heavy from the previous day's rain. The pitch is coir mat on a plastic base on what was wet grass. Hence there was no bounce, no pace.

We stuck to the winning formula, batting first, using our 20 overs, allow a healthy dose of extras, hit and run, to build our score and ended on 122.

Their batting was just fair (although their skip heaved a waist high fully to deep square to be out in first over). Basically you couldn't play normal shots and definitely not across the line and they paid the penalty when attempted. All out about 80 with Tim Norton and Barry Anderson claiming their first 'outdoor' wickets on tour.

Travellers Cup

XXIX Club miss a semi-final spot on run rate, not on net run rate. Not sure how that would have resulted but anyway, now we play a consolation final called Travellers Cup.

Final day of the festival today the XXIX Club took on Colorado (who we defeated in 1st round match) in the Travellers Cup at the home of the festival, the Philadelphia CC (our first game there in a 5th different location for our six matches).

Like Merion in parts, played on an oval that will soon be 30 lawn tennis courts to accommodate the greater member desire (for those also not playing golf on one of their three courses).

Fair to say the painted creases were the only way to distinguish the pitch from the outfield- and I'm not joking (see picture below) I.e. on a lawn tennis court (no turf base) still wet from recent rains.



The XXIXers, starting to feel the pinch, battled our way to 104 off 20, even in the face of some ultra-slow bowling at times that gave you no pace to hit with. Colorado passed us comfortably in 17th over.

A fantastic brunch followed at which the XXIX Club was awarded the Sportsmanship award (I think as consolation to being defeated in Travellers Cup).

All in all the XXIXers gave a more than admiral account of them/ourselves and I was privileged to lead the team throughout the tournament.

All now looking forward catching the train to the New York leg of the tour tomorrow.

Scorecards can be found here:

<http://www.cricketfestival.com/past-festivals/festival-2017/>

