

The wheels fell of the PCC juggernaut in a narrow defeat by the Kerala Strikers CC

This was always going to be a competitive match as Kerala Strikers had played 3 and won 2, whilst PCC had only played one. Despite Ryan Driver's retirement from cricket on medical grounds, PCC had plenty of good players in the squad, but they would need to be on their mettle against a team that had good batsman and a largely spin bowling attack. Unfortunately, PCC's usual strengths, tight bowling and excellent catching, deserted them and their pace attack was gobbled up by Naveen Vargesse who hit a superb 117 not out and took 5 wickets for 29 which included a hat-trick maiden over.

Kerala Strikers lost the toss and were asked to bat. PCC quickly made inroads into the KSCC batting order with Habby Singh getting Amal Devraj run out for 4 when he drove a free hit to Luke Stokes at mid-off and got run out by a country mile. Andre Human followed suit when he caught and bowled Aju John for 3 and quickly bowled Asif Tacholi for 8 just 3 balls later. Habby continued the pressure in his second over when he had Jidesh caught behind by Jainish Parikh for 1 and KSCC were in trouble at 22 for 4 in the 4th over. PCC looked to be in control but dropped catches were going to play a significant role as Andy dropped two. At this point the match took an entirely different path as Neveen Vargesse joined Roopesh Kalathil at the crease and although the run rate remained a little low at 6 per over, the hemorrhaging of wickets was curtailed. Their partnership continued until the 14th over when Roopesh was run out by Andy Emery when trying for a chancy 2nd run. 83 for 5 at drinks was some 20-30 runs behind the norm, but there must have been something in the water because on their return to the field, the run rate picked up and stayed at 10 per over, entirely due to Naveen's efforts and more dropped catches by Andy, Habby and Ben Walters. This allowed Naveen to add 30 more runs before the close of the innings and would prove to be very costly. Habby bowled well throughout and took 2 wickets in his final over, that of Suraj NS for 17 and Vimal Devraj for a duck to finish on 5 overs 3 for 17. Apart from Habby, the bowling lost its focus in the latter half as Vishnu was too short and Andre and Sree were hit for 20 runs off their final overs and the lack of a spinner took away the opportunity to vary the pace. KSCC had scored 108 in the last 10 overs and finished their 25 overs on 196 for 9.

This was going to be a monumental chase at 7.85 runs per over but PCC had the batsmen that could achieve it. Luke Stokes and Ben Walter, promoted to No 2 in Ryan's absence, both started well and attacked any loose balls. Ben was lucky not to be caught and bowled by Asif and another KSCC player in the 3rd over. Aju John took the brunt of the punishment but 8 runs per over was being achieved. A change of bowler brought results as Prasad Nair fooled Luke with a slower ball which he lobbed a simple to Asif at extra cover for 24 with the score on 38 in the 5th. Jainish took the crease and Ben took the lead in the run chase. Jainish was dropped by Suraj at long-on which allowed the partnership to last until the 10th over when another bowling change, Navaneeth Vinod, took a wicket – that of Ben for 41, 82 for 2. Andre was only at the crease for a brief moment as he sent a delivery straight to Prasad in Neveen's first over. Karan Mehta took over the strike as he plundered Suraj for 3 sixes, but Jainish fell for 17 at drinks on 115 for 3. PCC were still on track, but it was going to be tight. Karan and Habby struck out and maintained the asking rate until the 23rd over, by which time only 20 runs were needed off the last 3 overs. Then the wheels fell off. Karan went for 55 on Naveen's first ball of the 23rd over, followed by 8 runs. 12 off 2 overs needed. Only 3 runs off Prasad and 9 required off the last over. Habby was caught off Naveen's second ball, Vishnu was bowled off the third and Marcus Chalkey was caught and bowled off the fourth ball. 188 for 8 from 25 over and a loss by 8 runs. Disappointment all round and a feather in the caps of KSCC.

Both teams had opportunities to win and both made mistakes but in the end, it was Naveen Vargesse that made the difference and he was awarded the MotM Medal by Imran Khan, the Square leg umpire.

PCC would like to thank their sponsors, the Outback Bar, the Magic Bar, and the Pattaya Sports Club for their support and assistance.