

Letter from Tasmania: No. 13

G'day from sunny Australia!!!

It's officially bush fire season now and with smoke hanging around town from one about 40 kms away it's a timely reminder to clean the gutters out... not that you guys have to worry about that!! I saw some Oxfordshire vision on the news the other night all I can say is glad its you not me, very definitely not my cup of tea!

This week we commenced the second half of the season against South Launceston. All games from now until finals are two day games (Saturday-Saturday) so we haven't completed the match yet. South Launceston are third on the ladder about 1 game below us. They have two tall quick bowlers who played 2nd XI for Tasmania last year (at a rough guess our 2nd XI team would beat the Oxfordshire side 9 times out 10 - well lets be honest you can't be a good side if a 50 year old opens your bowling!) South also have a gun bat, probably the best player of poor bowling I have come across, but his nickname is "zero" simply because you bowl well to him early he has a habit of getting out for.... you guessed it, zero!

Playing at the NTCA #2 ground is always a good experience. The pitch offers something for everyone, simply because there is pace and bounce. The slower the wicket the worse the cricket, simple fact of the game. Looking at the pitch it wouldn't have been out of place as a section of the Nullabor Highway, meaning it was very flat! And in 30 degree heat we lost the toss!!!

Basically the trend of games on this ground is that if your side is able to get to tea around 3 for 160 you can almost guarantee 300 plus in the day. I have had a couple of days where the opposition has scored 400, long days trust me! So at tea they were 7 for 170 odd and we were right on top. Then the few overs after the break yours truly weaved his miracle spinning deliveries to the hapless tail and they were 9 for 190. Unfortunately if you play sensibly and straight it is hard to get out on roads. Their two big fast bowlers (one bats at six) did this to perfection, and we eventually had the number 11 run out after an 80 run stand. Chasing 270 was still under par form what we thought was a good total.

Unfortunately we had 5 overs to face and it is the most difficult time to bat. The worse thing is that the opposition appeal hard and the umpires are tired and lose concentration and our in form opener Matthew Shipp fell victim to a pretty horrendous LBW decision in the first over after successive appeals. Apparently 6'5" bowlers can hit the top of off stump bowling back of a length!!! It was a disappointing way to go into the rooms but we are very much in the game. Our batting depth is far stronger than South's and if we can get through the first hour unscathed we are in with a real shot. SO fingers crossed for no rain!!!

Anyway, best go take the Xmas tree down and get ready to guide the under 18's to victory in the 20/20 tournament tomorrow.