

Match Report: Final of the League 2011

It was a day that had promised much, the SW's Best Bowler (Bippin of Noé) versus the Best Batsman (Raynor of St Aulaye), our final internal league match of the 2011, but even those who had believed they had seen everything were in for a surprise.

Earlier in the week ahead of the fixture on Sunday the 4th, the weather intelligence had created much work behind the scenes as afoot plotting and planning for every possible eventuality, and thanks to Eymet who hosted the event, the ground and hospitality was most welcoming. As it turned out the weather cooperated to a degree, saving the heaviest showers for the tea break!

On the playing side the two teams served up a competitive match that moved continually from one team's advantage to the other. Not only was the cricket of a consistently high quality this only served to whet the appetite for the final overs of the match.

St Aulaye won the toss and decided to bat and with Raynor and Nott putting on 116 for the first wicket (at nearly 6 runs an over!), the Noé pace attack was in danger of being forced to retreat. In a critical set of decisions, Anbu (Noé Captain) brought on two slow bowlers, Usher and Hignall, and they effectively strangled the St Aulaye scoring rate, restricting the total to 185 for 7 at the end of the first 40 overs. Honours even, but an edge to Noé and momentum into the break.

During the Tea, the heavens opened and ACCSO officials were dusting down the contingency plans, thankfully the rain eased off and was only to return as a light drizzle. The effect on the wicket was minimal and the ground drained as well as the Eymet team had predicted, however the outfield was markedly slower than in the first innings.

Noé took the field with strong confidence, around 4.5 runs over was considered a testing but achievable target and with a deep Noé batting line up, St Aulaye knew they had to get wickets and keep getting them. The bowling began with fast/slow combination and a boundary saving field down the wicket which frustrated the normally prolific Noé openers and wickets began to fall. Not succumbing to panic Anbu and Sriram then started to build an innings and the scoring rate began to climb, and the two set a platform for the others, but crucially they could not get ahead of the rate. After Anbu (40) had departed, Sriram anchored the innings with classy glancing shots keeping the scoreboard ticking over, then as a new partner emerged (Sutton), the spectators felt that this partnership could see the Noé team home. However the defining moment came when having run a quick single, Sutton pulled up in obvious discomfort and Sriram left his ground to see to his partner, the ball was thrown to Sriram's vacant end and the bails knocked off. The appeal was considered by both Umpires in consultation and Sriram (63) was given out. Despite spirited fighting by the remaining Noé batsmen they could not stay at the crease and score, falling 18 runs short, but with as many balls still in the innings.

As you can imagine, the controversy over the run out spilled over into the stands, with much debate. Congratulations to St Aulaye and best wishes in their match against the best of the Ile De France at Damazan on the 25th of September, and finally commiserations to Noé.

It would be a shame that such a great day's cricket was remembered only for the one incident, for both teams played their hearts out and equally contributed to fabulous entertainment.