

## Fitmen Preside Over Presidents

*Fitmen 200-6 dec. - President's XI 128 All Out - Fitmen Win by 72 Runs*

An event of such magnitude as the annual 'President's' 'XI' requires a match report of equal quality and that is exactly what you are about to read. So grab a gin from the drinks cabinet, sit back (or forward if your eyesight isn't what it used to be) and settle in to what will inevitably be a very long story. If you have a short attention span, or possibly just can't be arsed to read this lengthy report, please skip to the last few paragraphs and then just pretend you have read the rest.

Why don't we begin with a brief overview of the season so far? As we well know, this season has been a rather bleak affair. Out of 26 scheduled games (not including today's) we have had 14 affected by rain. So, it came with great surprise when the weather made a turn for the better in the lead up to what was being dubbed 'the greatest match in history'. Can't be sure who said that but I'm pretty sure I heard it somewhere.

Many players were drafted from all over the city to be part of this spectacular event which was described as second only to the Olympics, in terms of passion, pride and sheer sporting ability. Again, the source of this comment cannot be named for various reasons. After being rearranged from 7th July (would have been rained off anyway) a number of big names were unavailable which came as a disappointment to those who were due to pack the Ashfield house. Fortunately, after many emails and texts there were 2 teams available, give or take...

Food orders were given just a few days before the match, as the organisers didn't want to let the cat out of the bag about what would be on offer. Again, much like the Olympic opening ceremony. Unfortunately, unbeknown to most other Fitmen, the key chicken wing, pakora and spicy sauces chefs were unavailable for selection. However these miserable thoughts were cast aside with a Sunday morning visit to Milan.....sorry, that should read Milan's Indian takeaway.

'Thanks Mark, morning everyone. And what a glorious morning it is too'...is what Richie Benaud would have said on Sunday but unfortunately he was unavailable. However, if he had been available he most certainly would have said that as there was not a cloud in the sky. A 12:30 start time meant that some people eventually rocked up at 13:00, with the rest arriving at 13:30. Well done to those involved.

The teams were decided over a few pints of the chosen ale of Holden's Golden Glow and at the non-existent toss, one of the two captains won and the Fitmen were ordered to bat first. The team sheets were pinned to the club house, the bell was rung and Messrs Bice and Caesar Jr strode to the surprisingly firm wicket at 13:45 for what was to be one of the great matches.

Opening the bowling was once-a-season player Ben Jowett and less-than-once-a-season player Charlie Hill. Both bowlers started well, with Charlie being one of the few players to find some movement on a cloudless day. It was he who broke the opening partnership with Rich chopping one on that moved nicely off the seam.

The Fitmen didn't need to worry about the early wicket as Caesar the Younger and Mr T put on a large partnership with some well timed boundaries from T and some well weighted 3s from Tom who picked out the 10 year old fielders with great aplomb. Mr T made his way to 50 at less than a run a ball with some glorious cover drives mixed with the occasional hoick over mid-wicket. Meanwhile, TC Jnr slowly but surely battled on, finding the gaps and running hard before clipping a 2 and buggering off to the pavilion, having retired on 51.

It was at this point that your correspondent mentally switched off and had a nap in the sun. Then suddenly it was time to crack on and do some umpiring which is where the story picks up again.

El Presidenté bowled some uncharacteristically expensive overs but picked up the prized wicket of Mr T. Some terrific bowling from Dave Birman (2-23 off 5) and a one over wonder from Howarth (1-4), meant the Presidents were making things more even. 11 year old Uncle Usman was given an over near the end when Ash was dropped at slip by Greg Pons.

At the final drinks break it was decided, through fear of the Fitmen captain being shunned by the elders for the rest of his career, that 200 would be the declaration total. This total was reached with Jon Howes being the only man not to bat. He wasn't particularly impressed, even though he was number 10.

It was now time for tea. The selection was sublime. Just, quite sublime. Plenty of sandwiches, savoury snacks, crisps and sweets were enjoyed by all in attendance. The prolonged tea break allowed many a Golden Glow to be consumed.

The Presidents innings started with the small deal of Mike Ralph bowling on a solid track with 4 slips and 2 gulleys. Fortunately for the openers he decided to chuck a couple down leg side for 4 wides. It later turned out that he was bowling off the mark for the next wicket along...With Jon Howes bowling from the other end, the Presidents raced along to 35 off the first 4 overs.

Dangerous Dave Healey was the first Fitman to take a wicket with Dave Birman skying one into the safe hands of Captain Caesar. He later picked up the other opener, Lord Howarth for one of the weakest LBW appeals ever witnessed. The bowler casually asked and the umpire (Ben Jowett) quickly gave, to the batsmans disbelief. Rather than thank the umpire, the Fitmen decided to give him some shit, in the true Fitmen way...

Breaking this partnership openend the door to the Fitmen who took advantage with Shah, Ash, Bice and Tahir all picking up wickets. 8 bowlers were used by the Cap'n in a 'tactical' move to not allow the batsmen to settle down. Many spectators noticed the pen and paper held by the captain for the entire innings. It was widely thought that this was to note down overs and tactics. However, it later transpired that this was a brand new inter-team scoring system based upon points, gold stars and smiley faces invented and understood by one person. One can say that Ralphies stunning run out of Ben Jowett was scored the best part of a smiley face but due to earlier wide bowling, this face was slightly deformed.

The President's XI were eventually undone by the Fitmen on 128 all out despite latecomer and no longer Fitman Raj's 29 not out.

TC Sr's BBQ, courtesy of Aldi, was burning away as the final wicket fell and a quid in a box got everyone a burger. As the sun began to set on a wonderful day, only 4 pints of Holdens Golden Glow remained at the bar. A well judged day. A marvellous day was had by all with quality cricket, food and company.

Well, that's 3 days of my life taken up by writing this and it's also probably the best part of your day taken up reading it. So cheers.