

My Dear Friends,

Victory is sweet especially when hard fought and won. We played a reasonable side and perhaps should've made easier work of it but won comprehensively in the end. A victory that was a testament to the curmudgeonly, combative and resolute Juka Hazard and the inspirational, inventive captaincy and crafty, classy bowling of our Skip, Gauch.

Saturday started a little differently to any other this season with all players at the ground nice and early and a club room address by the Skip. He duly won the toss and surprised many who had breakfasted with him, by choosing to bat. Possum and Odie went out and looked solid against the best opening attack we have faced this year. Notwithstanding, a severe bilious attack at Swinging Dorr's on Friday morning, Possum started where he had left off the previous week. In behind the ball with classy technique and concentration. He seemed set to bat for a long time.

Odie missed one on the stumps and was out to his preferred mode, LBW. SOK entered to a barrage of what Jacana would call sledging but we may call personal abuse. His expansive drive at his first ball was probably not the Skip had in mind when he urged us to bat the 70 overs. It resulted in a thin edge and his dismissal.

Gauch entered the fray to face the hat trick ball and blocked out a full toss on leg that in other circumstances he might have heaved for six over square leg. Hence forth he looked in great nick, middling every ball and hitting 3 fours and a massive six over mid-on that looked creek bound until the very top of the hurricane fence intervened. He and Possum put on 21 and we looked in good shape until Possum went out to his preferred mode, caught off a lofted shot. You all know the wind direction at the time. His 19 included a six and a four.

No matter, we had the Surgeon at 3rd drop, fresh from a century against our opponents the last time we met. Order was restored and the match seemed to be in a rhythm favouring us until to everyone's surprise Gauch was out caught on the boundary at deep square leg for 20. A century seemed in the offing so it was a big loss to the side. POK did the family thing and chose not to leave his brother alone on a duck and was out for 0 driving in the air to mid-off. He was a little unlucky, given the fielder who caught him had a broken hand.

Enter Juka, cursing himself and others, he resolved to ensure that we made a score we could defend. Sam and Deano enjoyed a partnership of 43 batting in the manner required for a final. Solid defence, leaving many balls so as to wear the attack down, we looked to have wrested back control when Sam missed a straight one and was bowled for 32, which included 4 fours. The Keeper from Prague, direct from Prague was in good nick and hit the same number of boundaries in his 19 and was out playing on when trying to smash his fifth four. Juka was up the other end, eyes rolling, exclaiming profanities as Tong strode out. Normie seemed never to have recovered from the Skip's decision to bat and was out trying to pull a full ball with only 3 deliveries to go until tea, much to the consternation and chagrin of your humble correspondent.

I walked out to face those remaining balls to a barrage of abuse. Not, as you may imagine, from our opponents but from my redoubtable batting partner Deano. He left me in no doubt as to the course I should take and the opprobrium he would visit on me if I let him down. We made it to tea 8 down for under 150 and in some trouble.

We batted another 20 after tea and Juka was magnificent. He was disciplined. His defence was impregnable but he took full toll on anything loose, smacking a six and eleven fours in his 68. When he came to the wicket we were 5 for 65. When he left we were 9 for 222 and in a competitive position. The MFS have had many great innings this year. Indeed 6 of our players have made centuries during the season but none was more important or well-planned than Juka's 68 in the semi-final. KG was unable to get his bat out of the way to his first ball and joined the O'Kane clan for a day, leaving me robbed of

another century. 222 was not a score that we would've accepted at the start of the day but was much better than we could've expected at various points of our innings.

This left Jacana with 11 overs to face until stumps. The Skip roused everyone with a speech that was measured but inspirational and it was clear that it would take some exceptional batting for Jacana to survive the night with all 10 wickets intact. POK opened the bowling and his first over was a beauty. Four well directed balls short at the opener before a full one at his pads and he was duly given out LBW for the second time against an O'Kane in two games. This time the umpire would not be threatened with a chair, though.

KG opened from the other end and in an inspired piece of captaincy, Gauch placed SOK at deep mid-wicket on the boundary. A placement that surprised even the bowler when he dropped one short to see it hit hard and flat towards a the boundary before Sean held an vital and very good catch, in front of his face. KG was unlucky not to pick up their best bat when he slashed at one outside off and it flew to my left at gully where I got my left hand to it but grassed the chance. I was saved from any great shame by POK who bowled the perfect line and length outside off to have him feather one into Honnsie's always safe gloves. They survived the remaining overs to be 3 for 19 at stumps. We were on the ascendant but not home yet.

It was great to be supported on the day by MFS stalwarts, Pigeon, Freak, Cougar, Eddo and our number one supporter Ian, Singlets, Wenlock. Cougar was accompanied by, very junior Cougar, who will no doubt follow his dad and brother and keep for the MFS, when Honnsie is unavailable in a far flung part of our globe. It was also great to have the Patron looking on and we were very happy to see Pola's 2nds take the first innings points in their final on the turf wicket next to us. Indeed they looked a certainty to play in the Grand Final as we consumed a couple of beers in the pavilion.

Day two commenced and those of us who are quite old which is to say everyone except POK and Surgeon were a little stiff and sore. Once again POK and KG opened and bowled well, but couldn't achieve the break through and we were a little flat in the field. Enter the Skip to change the game. Gauch bowled with discipline and guile and got their first drop, caught sharply at slip by the Possum, who never looked like dropping the sharp, low chance. This made many of us happy as their batter had taken the unusual decision to sledge POK by asking if he was happy, just before, Gauch dismissed him. We were happy to tell him that POK was very happy as he trudged off. The Skip also bowled two perfect off cutters to bowl their keeper and their skipper. We then fell into a bit of a lull as their opening bowlers batted well to put on 45 until Gauch again intervened and has their top scorer caught behind, slashing at one that was a little shorter and a fair bit quicker. In all Gauch bowled 8 overs and took 4 crucial wickets for 30. POK re-joined the fray to have their number 10 well snared by Possum at gully. POK was fast and furious for 16 overs and took 3 for 32 with 9 maidens. He set us up for victory the previous evening and Gauch finished the job on Sunday. KG finished with 1 for 16 off 7 and Tong had 5 good overs for 18 and Juka 2 for 13.

The fielding was fantastic. The Keeper from Prague was safe as houses. Possum was great in the slips and they both took two catches. Odie and Sam held great catches to wrap the game up. Sam's took a running catch and Odie help one high above his head to finish the game and take us to the Grand Final. We were again well supported by the Pigeon, Patron, Singlets and several other players. Special mention to Oz for scoring for us.

We were determined and well led and all agreed with Gauch that Dean Jukic was man of the match.

We repaired to the pavilion for celebratory drinks and Honnsie and Tong cooked up steaks for all as we watched the 2nds fight out a great win and join us as 2015 grand finalists. To top off a great weekend KG took over as our most valuable player with last year's second most valuable player again second. Sam was third. Congratulations to KG on a great season with 27 wickets thus far.

We will play West Coburg at Ormond next Saturday and Sunday in the Grand Final the venue for the 2nds is yet to be determined.

Cheers

Brett