

M Willis	dnb		-
extras		(b0 lb3 w11 nb4)	18
TOTAL		7 wickets for	161

FOW

1-6(E Cleere) 2-18(R Singh) 3-25(M Guest) 4-41(J Anders) 5-50(A Aftaf) 6-99(N Naik)
7-134(S Moore)

Bowler	O	M	R	W	wd	nb
C Maritz	8	0	23	3	-	-
B Mullin	5	0	28	1	-	-
I Byrne	6	1	20	1	-	-
J Maritz	4	0	44	0	-	-
G Costello	8	0	25	2	-	-
D Coleman	8	1	18	0	-	-

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Phoenix 5ths produced a superb performance to grind out victory away to The Hills last weekend. It was a fantastic collective performance that was also peppered with individual brilliance that saw Matt Guests slide over the line.

The old cliché 'a game of two halves' is rampantly overused but this encounter could be split into four distinct acts and each innings was most definitely an innings of two halves. The Hills were in command at 112 for 3 before a fielding and bowling fight back restricted them to 160 for 9 after 40 overs while Phoenix slumped to 50 for 5 before some brilliant batting from the youngsters saw the visitors home with an over to spare.

Anders may be a familiar name for Phoenix members to see producing prolific and eye catching performances but this game provided another name to add to the list. And that name belongs to the most senior of the clan who produced a sublime spell of bowling to haul his side back into the game just when it seemed The Hills would pile up a massive first innings total. John Anders produced astonishing figures of 7-1-20-6 decimate the hosts batting line-up and give his side a good shot at victory.

Then, in reply, just when it looked as if the game was had slipped away from Phoenix, Nitin Naik, produced a brutal display of hitting to drag his side back into the contest before Michael Fahy calmly guided his side over the finish line with an innings of real class, poise and elegance.

Matt Guest continued his 100% record for the season by losing the toss and being asked to bowl with conditions grey overhead and a little rain in the air. The innings started solidly for Phoenix as, Mike Willis, who had dragged himself from his sick bed to play, troubled the openers with pace and bounce. Twice he found the outside edge only to see the nick evaded the grasp of the slip fielder but it was a fine spell of bowling. At the other end, Dev Dismore, making his first appearance of the season proved to be just as much a handful and he made the breakthrough when Farrell (8) tried one back cut too many and guided the ball into the hands of Ram Singh at slip.

The standard of bowling and fielding was excellent after the initial breakthrough but

The Hills showed all their experience to keep knocking the ball around and ensure the scoreboard ticked over without offering many chances. Fahy, Singh and Naik bowled well and troubled the batsmen at various stages but couldn't make any further inroads.

Chances did start to come, though, after the introduction of Shan Syed following the drinks break. His flight and guile both tempted and bemused The Hills batsmen. However it was skipper, Matt Guest, who got the wicket Phoenix needed as he had the opposition skipper Marty Moore (24) removed by a brilliant one handed catch by John Anders at short extra cover.

Syed then engineered a chance in his next over as new batsman, J Martiz, lofted a chance between Willis and Moore. Moore got fingers to the ball diving away to his right but couldn't hang on but things were already looking up for the visitors.

Whether it was a prescient move by Captain Guest, some blind luck, or a mixture of both, to put John Anders into the attack it was about to reap great rewards for the side. It is hard to properly chronicle such a spell of bowling after the fact as so many chances were offered aside from the wickets that fell but the effort must be made!

When Anders had J Martiz (3) caught behind by Cleere, who collected his first scalp as a wicketkeeper, little could have anyone suspected the carnage to follow. Denny (7) was victim #2 in his next over before the dangerous Costello (56) was removed with a beautiful in-swinger in his 3rd over leaving The Hills 116 for 5. Dev Dismore, who was excellent in all three disciplines throughout the game, then got in on the act as he cleaned up Mullin's (1) middle stump to keep the pressure on.

Anders couldn't make it four wickets from four overs but he eyed the possibility of more when C Maritz played a pull-drive for 4 over the head of Moore at close(ish) Mid-On. He should have struck paydirt in his next over but Moore couldn't backtrack in time to collect another shot offered in his direction. However the fielder had a reprieve, and Anders had #4, when C Maritz (10) smashed one straight at Moore who took the catch above his head.

Five-for was on the cards and it wasn't long in coming as the 5th ball of the very same over saw Anders clean up Coleman (0) with another lovely in-swinger that knocked back off stump. Then the head of the Anders clan concluded a triple wicket maiden, and set himself up for a hat-trick, with another in-swinger that was destined to clean up Byrnes (0) off stump until he edged the ball into the grateful hands of Singh at slip.

Anders couldn't complete the hat-trick with the first ball of his next over as, E Maritz, who would finish unbeaten on 21, blocked another fine delivery but the damage was done. The Hills did rally late on and E Maritz and McGrane put together a nice partnership to take their side along to 160 for 9 off 40 and set a challenging total.

Phoenix didn't get off to the best of starts with their chase as Cleere (1) fell first ball of the second over before Ram Singh (11) skewed an attempted off drive straight up in the air and into the gloves of the wicketkeeper to leave Phoenix 18 for 2 off 7 overs. The Hills bowling was brilliantly lead by C Maritz, it must be noted, who produced some pace, swing and bounce at various stages to trouble the batsmen.

Skipper, Matt Guest (3), who had suffered a thigh injury and required a runner early in his innings, was next to go as he inexplicably padded up to an inswinger from C Maritz. That brought John Anders to the crease and it looked for all the world as though it would be his day from start to finish as he crashed an off drive through cover for a boundary before another followed after he unfurled a well timed sweep. However Anders (15) luck ran out soon after as he gloved a leg-side delivery into the hands of the keeper, and walked before being given out by the umpire, just as he looked poised to go on.

When Ali Aftab (4) fell caught in the deep by McGrane off the bowling of Byrne it looked as though Phoenix were in massive trouble having been reduced to 50 for 5. However Phoenix 5ths are blessed with some superb talent in the middle order and Nitin Naik and Michael Fahy began the fightback.

Phoenix needed 111 runs to win with 5 of their top order gone and things didn't look too bright. However Naik and Fahy showed their quality as they pushed the ball around and took what was on offer and ticked the scoreboard along at a reasonable rate. The surge that brought Phoenix back into the game was provided by Nitin Naik who produced some vicious hitting in a short burst that allowed his side to eye victory again. Naik brutally smashed four 6's and two 4's as he gave his team some real momentum. Naik (44) fell after a superb knock when bowled by Costello but the partnership of 49 he and Fahy had produced was key to the ultimate success of the visitors.

Phoenix were 99 for 5 when Moore joined Fahy at the crease but, luckily for Phoenix, Fahy was well settled at this stage. With plenty of overs in hand the pair had time to settle into a partnership and slowly move the score towards the target. Fahy kept the ship afloat, while managing not to be anchored down by Moore, with some classy batting and his ability to turn one run into two, and two runs into three, with his superb running between the wickets would prove key in the end.

Fahy kept a cool head as the innings entered its latter stages while Moore struggled to time the ball. However the youngster took on the leading role and made sure the run rate never got above 4 an over. Just as Phoenix were within striking distance of the total, Moore (7), went in disappointing fashion as he top edged a pull shot to square leg. The partnership of 35 between the pair was a good one, though, and Dev Dismore came to the crease with the winning post in sight.

Dismore did have an early scare as he scorched a pull shot straight to midwicket but the velocity with which the ball was hit ensured the fielder could only palm the ball over his head rather than hold the catch. The debutant settled down thereafter and continued to take what was on offer in tandem with Fahy as they whittled down the target.

With 4 overs left Phoenix required 17 more runs to win and the game was finely poised. The Hills had maintained their discipline with their bowling and had one more over from C Martiz left up their sleeve while Phoenix had kept the score moving along without taking too many risks. C Maritz produced an excellent over under pressure and conceded only two runs.

The tension was starting to mount heading into the final three overs but the pressure was soon piled on The Hills as Dev Dismore dispatched the first ball of the over to the boundary. He and Fahy added a couple more singles to cut the deficit to nine runs at the end of the over with 12 balls of the match remaining.

Fahy was closing in on a half century but that landmark didn't factor into his thinking with the finishing line in sight. The Phoenix duo picked off five runs from the first five balls of the over before Dismore finished things in style with well timed pull to the boundary to seal victory by three wickets with just one over to spare.

Two wins from two games has signalled a great start to the season for Phoenix 5th XI. This performance was something of a dichotomy. Phoenix were up against it, without playing badly, whilst bowling but rallied to restrict their opponents. They were then up against it while batting, troubles of their own making, before rallying superbly losing only 2 wickets for the final 111 runs of the game.

Once again every player contributed fully to the sides win in a very hard fought and evenly contested game.