

# MATCH REPORT

SSC VS UCC 5<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2015

By Mark Jones



## SSC hold nerve to topple UCC

Sumedha (40\*) and Joel (28\*) led SSC home in a tense run chase. However, it was club legend Jeewantha, who took career best figures of 13/6, who stole the show at a perfect day for cricket at the RMIT Oval.

UCC's skipper Vijesh called correctly for once and opted to bat. This seemed like an obvious decision as openers Davis and Dormer had been in wonderful form recently. In particular, Davis had scored 5 consecutive 40's on the way to being the league's current top run scorer. However, in the second over, Hiran bowled a perfect fuller ball that Davis (6) had no answer to. It snuck under the bat and the stumps were splayed as Hiran ran off, roaring in delight. Through Chetan and Dormer, UCC looked to consolidate and Dormer started to look increasingly confident at the crease, despite offering 2 chances that on another day would've been pounced.

Then, in a moment of brilliance, Joel turned to Jeewantha. In his first over, the 6<sup>th</sup> of the innings, he removed Chetan (4), who played all round a straight one to leave UCC at 37/2. Dormer continued to hit 2 sixes and 3 fours on his way to 40 off 32 balls but this signalled a horror collapse from the UCC perspective, and it was that man, Jeewantha, that was the architect.

In the over before drinks, he enticed Meikle to hole out, and when Malone (2) was bowled two balls later, UCC were struggling at 60-4. Matters became worse in Jeewantha's next over as Pankaj and Morris both perished to the wily veteran who was now bouncing to the crease like a new born pup. When Jeewantha found Green's edge UCC were 74/7 and a hundred was a long cry away. However, UCC's lower order staged a comeback. Captain Vijesh hit 31 off 23 balls (including 1 four and six) and some excellent running between Bala (17) and Alok (7) took UCC to a sub-par but potentially competitive total of 128.

In the ensuing chase, there was everything: Good hitting, tight bowling, good catching. It would all boil down to who could hold their nerve in what are always extremely tense encounters between these two evenly matched sides.

Hiran (16) got SSC off to a fabulous start with two authoritative pull strokes to two good Vijesh bouncers. With Dileepa (14) also finding the boundary, UCC really needed a wicket and as so often it was Malone (1/14) who made the breakthrough. Hiran, previously untroubled, was undone by a Malone special to pop up a return catch. One then led to two as newly introduced to the attack Bala got one through Dileepa's defence. UCC were now sensing blood, bowling with discipline and aggression. Priyantha hit a bullet cut to try to ease the pressure but could only find the safe hands of Dormer who made a tough chance look easy.

Sumedha, who was at the other end, was battling away to keep the UCC bowlers at bay, and his innings, could've been the difference between the sides. Despite losing Nilanka (4), he kept calm, even with the run rate rising due to some terrific UCC bowling. Upon Nilanka's departure, Joel strolled to the crease with his side in need of a captain's knock and once again, he proved his reputation as a big match player. After weathering some testing opening deliveries Joel found the boundary at the right times, and with Sumedha batting more freely, the match was delicately poised going into the final 3 overs. Sumedha retired in the 18<sup>th</sup> over, and after Davis caught Banuka with 8 balls to go, UCC had a renewed sense of hope.

Pankaj was trusted with the final over with SSC needing 8 runs to win. Joel, however, didn't want to wait until the last ball and calved a six over long off to tie up the match with 3 balls to spare. Despite a play and a miss next ball, he saw his team home to ecstatic celebrations from his teammates, with UCC pondering what might have been.

Jeewantha deservedly won his first Man of the Match award, and Joel and Sumedha batted masterfully. Dormer and Vijesh led the way with the bat and Malone and Bala (3/16) were exceptional with the ball for UCC.

Will these sides meet again in the final? Only time will tell.