

## Kiwi pair missing in action as UCC go down to SSC



*Guy 'Ronaldo' Dormer and 'Last Action Hero' Steve Meikle absent as UCC defeated by SSC*

In news that has already saddened cricket fans and humanitarians around the world, the UCC's cricket season is over. The 'UN' of world cricket was defeated by SSC in Sunday's first semi-final of the VCA's T20 competition, a result leaving pundits and eczema sufferers scratching their heads. Going down by 4 wickets at Ho Chi Minh City's RMIT campus in D7, the absent New Zealand batting pair of Steve Meikle, rumored to be manipulating hedge funds in the Cayman Islands, and Guy Dormer, who comically ripped his calf in half attempting to kick a soccer ball\* two weeks ago, were big losses in the lead up to the most important game of the season.

Sent into bat on a humid Saigon morning, UCC were forced to shuffle their batting order without leading run-scorer Dormer at the top, elevating Rajesh to open with James, the man with the best legs in Vietnamese cricket. Up against some tight line and length from SSC's Chandana, Banuka and Sumedha, they could only eke out a very uncharacteristic 6 from the first three and half overs, tempting Rajesh to swing wildly at a straight one and get bowled. Jon Aspin came in at three to thunderous applause from no-one, but began to move the scoreboard with James anyway. A few nicely timed shots punctured the infield and

found the rope, until several dot balls in a row created enough pressure for James to follow his opening partner, cleaned bowled by Banuka for 20 off 25. From there, potential danger man Chetan holed out quickly to gully for 1, which brought captain Vijesh to the crease at number five. Attempting to rebuild the innings with the self-proclaimed “semi-final specialist” Aspin, they looked good until the 12th over, when Jon forgot to stay at home and was run out for 27 off 17 amid confusion, turning down a risky second run too late, and creating a turning point in the game.

From there, there wasn't much else to speak of UCC batting-wise, unless you want to write a book called 'how to commit suicide on a cricket pitch by Pankaj Gaur', who had looked in form until he ran himself out in the 15th. Note to young players on this one, if you can't see the cricket ball from under your helmet, don't go wandering down the wicket like a stoned seagull looking for hot chips at the beach; it's never going to end that well. After that, UCC's late-middle order also failed to ignite against decent bowling. Vijesh (23 off 20) was caught by Banuka, who took a brilliant running outfield catch just inside the rope, Geoff and Danny both left the field without scoring, and at the end of 19.3 overs, the UCC had been bowled out for 112, a score well below par in this league. The SSC had bowled exceptionally well in the early overs, and backed that up with some excellent all around fielding. Chandana (0-17), Banuka (1-19) and Sumedha (1-21) all kept it tight from their four overs each, while legspinner Akil (3-29 off 3) and Padmal (2-14 off 3) were the multiple wicket takers. They also gave away a miserly 8 extras, compared to UCC's profligate 25.

Chasing, SSC got off to a shocking start that had UCC believing they could defend their small total, and probably should have, as they were soon 3 for 8 after Vijesh (1-20) and Malone, two in two balls (3-32) turned the screws with some high pressure bowling. The “Dong Nai Express” Bala (2-15) then had Sumedha caught behind, before Malone grabbed his third to leave the Sri Lankan's in deep trouble at 5-44 after nine. However, this brought eventual MOM Joel to the crease at number seven, and despite the loss of Padmal LBW, once he got together with next man in Chandana, there would be no Grand Final return for the salmon-clad one's. Despite a costly tenth over, UCC were in a strong position at the halfway water break, but then made some fielding mistakes, bowled a few loose balls and gave away too many extras, allowing the two experienced batsmen to get set. Even before one over of spin was dispatched for 18, quality, simple batting by the pair meant that momentum had swung firmly in SSC's favour, and they soon required only eight from the next three overs for victory. This they easily did in the 18th, with Joel (38 not out) and Chandana (24 not out) proving once again that run rate is never a problem, and batting is always about building partnerships, staying at the crease and keeping wickets in hand at the right time under pressure.

Well done to everyone who played the game in fair spirit, and congratulations to SSC who were much better than their opposition on the day.

In the second semi ISCS thrashed PSCC by bowling them out for 97, before getting the runs in just over ten overs.

***SSC will meet ISCS in the VCA T20 Final next week, 9am Sunday June 5<sup>th</sup> @ RMIT, D7.***

- JA

*\*yes, that's exactly what happened, just ask him.*

