

Third Grade Final, Mandeville Sports Ground, March 27, 2010

A sublime opening partnership of 156 propelled Swannanoa to victory at the Mandeville Sports Centre on March 27! A memorable day which ended with high-spirited clowning and a team member in a one-piece Mankini costume. (see pictures)

A well-rounded Noa team had gathered at the 'Ville, conscious of instructions to be there good and early for the Midday start. Anxiety rippled through tense shoulders and hamstrings as word got round that Phil was somewhere on the Northern Motorway, but no fear...he'd be with us by 12.30.

The boys gathered, support crew on shoulder, for one last briefing from Captain Drakey. God bless and God speed. The blessing was appropriate, for it was Swannanoa's day. Drakey and Lango did all the right things early on, first gauging the pace of the wicket and the quality of the bowling. Rangiora found it increasingly hard to get its groove thing going, as opening bowler Meiring toiled admirably despite a painful shoulder. Downs was typically hard to get away but the pressure was partially released when Mariu left the bowling crease surprisingly early. Our openers began to take to the offerings of Fletcher, Banks and Sutton with relish - no mean feat considering Rangiora are masters of miserly bowling. Psychic energy shifted toward the batsmen. Drake had the early initiative but Lang was not to be outshone. Several full-extension cover drives and a clubbed slog sweep for six were among the highlights in a partnership that must surely have set recent club records (a fact generally agreed at 11pm that night).

This memorable piece of team batsmanship came to an end with the departure of Lang, leaving Luke with the terrible job of coming in next. It was not O'Ds day, nipped out by the wily Murray Sail. Similarly Dugdale came a cropper to the beleaguered Meiring. Osbourne fared better (31) while Scott (13) and Ryan (19) finished off proceedings. No one was Ryan-run out, despite the frenetic running. In another piece of wonderment, Scott was given LBW by the neutral umpire and strolled off, happy as a newborn lamb. Who else to mention? Oh, Rusty. A beacon, despite again being nearly relegated to the last paragraph of the innings report - this time delivering a barnstorming 90.

So, Swannanoa 245 or thereabouts. Sure, it could have been 280 or possibly 300, but who could argue with our highest score of the season.

Rangiora started in equally bullish fashion, until the Heff encouraged Sail to chop the red round thing on to his stumps - key wicket. Paul and Bos were not put off however as the score raced along close to the required 6 an over until Olsen came into the play with an LBW shout on Paul Clement, then cleaning out the dangerous Mariu and Meiring. Around this time, scribe recalls, Hayden snared a stunning one-handed caught and bowled. Umpire John was mightily grateful for this because if luck had been more unkind we may have had a decapitated umpire on our hands.

Next to strike was the mercurial Adonis 'Aussie' (the Greek), who snared Cartwright for 11. By now it was looking good for the 'Noa, although hope remained for Rangiora while Fletcher was at the crease. He and Downs grabbed 32 and 29 apiece but their tail-end effort was fortunately in vain. Dugdale had Fletch caught while Drakey floated a few up to stump Downes and trap Al Sutton in front. Rangiora out for 182 and the celebrations could begin.

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And begin, the celebrations certainly did. Proceedings began sedately with the official prize-giving in the Mandeville clubrooms, as Swannanoa and its nemesis Ohoka swept the trophy cabinet bare.

Gradually the tempo of the evening increased, however, as the Noa moved on to Truro Place, otherwise known as the street in the former paddock just over the fence. Keith (aka Alf, Aussie, The Greek) and Katie put on an evening of drinking and BBQ which turned to hysterics when our host (Aussie) donned a vivid green Mankini suit. Tears are still being wiped from eyes and psychologists consulted for remedial therapy...and that's just his team-mates we're talking about.

Fortunately, for the sake of decorum, our spiritual leader on the day, Reverend Drake, was in a position to invite team members forward to break bread and drink from the Cup of 3rd Grade Success, last won by Swannanoa in 1987. Lance had a beard in those days, it was noted.

So, we went happily home, safe in the knowledge it had been a fine season. Good luck to the Australian tourists and same to the Central Otago crew. We plan to meet up for a team pizza and drinks again soon, Cheers, Anon.

Batting:

Russell Drake 90 (96 deliveries)

Nathan Lang 56 (61)

Tim Osbourne Not Out 31 (28)

Derek Scott 13 (26)

Hayden Ryan Not Out 19 (17)

Luke O'Donnell 1 (6)

Hamish Dugdale (3)

Did Not Bat - Olsen, Woods, Eleftheriou, Heffernan

Bowling:

Heffernan - 4 overs, no maidens, 1 for 22

Olsen - 8 overs, no maidens, 3 for 49

Ryan - 7 overs, one maiden, 2 for 25

Eleftheriou - 6 overs, no maidens, 1 for 24

Dugdale - 8 overs, 1 maiden, 1 for 35

Drake - 4.4 overs, no maidens, 2 for 17