

Phoenix v Merrion 20/08/11

Both sides had something to play for in this league fixture. Merrion were probably still smarting from their Irish Senior Cup exit at the hands of Phoenix and still in contention for the league title. Phoenix needed a win to try and climb out of the relegation zone. Ted Williamson remained out of the side with Coach Bray, Masud Ahmed and Jonty Wardell also out. Desmond O'Leary maintained the Munster representation with Stephen Neill earning a 1st xi recall. The eleven was: Captain Dickeson, Rory Flanagan, Ryan Gallagher, Conor Kelly, David Langford-Smith, Desmond O'Leary, Osama Khan, Amit Battan, Asim Nazir, Stephen Neill, Sadaf Raza. Merrion won the toss and elected to bat.

Phoenix continued with the relatively recent new ball combination of Langford-Smith and Flanagan and the World Cup hero removed the potentially dangerous Ackland in the first over. Flanagan dismissed former international Dominc Joyce in the sixth over with O'Leary taking the catch behind the stumps and the home team's sense of purpose was further rewarded when Khan moved swiftly to take a catch at midwicket as Flanagan bagged the scalp of Anderson. In his seventh over Langford-Smith tasted further success when he bowled Brown for 10 to leave the visitors on 43 for 4. The first bowling change saw Khan replace Flanagan and after an indifferent first over Khan had Kane lbw in his next. After 10 overs Langford-Smith closed on 2-28 and was replaced by Kelly. Allwright struck two sixes in Kelly's first over but the Dubliner bowled with such control thereafter that he conceded only a further 9 runs and took 2 wickets – Allwright and Beasley- and was on hand at the stumps to complete the run out of Tice after a good throw from Flanagan in the outfield. At the other end Khan bowled Petrie and Chetkovich and the innings closed on 101 all out in less than two hours.

After a good day at the office for the bowlers could the batsmen capitalise by completing the victory. Such is the balance of ability and application at Phoenix that to a large extent this means asking the same players to perform in both disciplines. Flanagan and Gallagher took the score to 14 before the Ulsterman fell lbw to Petrie. The bowler went on to bowl an unbroken spell of 10 overs and beat the bat many times to earn admiration from the onlookers but it would be the other bowlers who would take all the remaining wickets. Flanagan, Battan and Langford-Smith all fell to Joyce which put Phoenix on 29 for 4 and left Conor Kelly facing a long and potentially lonely struggle. However, Captain Dickeson struck one or two lusty blows at the other end and with some wides and leg byes thrown in the score reached 73 before the skipper was bowled by Anderson. Under advice from President Mullins to assist Kelly by staying as long as he could O'Leary negotiated 26 deliveries for 1 run and Phoenix needed 16 to win when Joyce finally got him lbw. Khan made 2 and Asim Nazir was next in with arguably two genuine number elevens left. Nazir and Kelly added 4 in singles and then Nazir finished the match in style with consecutive boundaries on the leg side against Anderson. Phoenix had won by 3 wickets.

Man of the Match: Conor Kelly 2-21, 44 not out