

Match Report: Frensham C.C. vs. Hetairoi C.C. (1st XI)

3rd September 2023

Neal Thathapudi

The place: Frensham Cricket Club.

The date: Sunday 3rd September 2023.

The time: 13:00hrs.

This could mean only one thing: The Hetairoi 1st (and only) XI were back in Surrey.

At the start of the August Bank Holiday weekend Hetairoi.com showed that the dynamic duo of N. Thathapudi and J. Ball were going to take on the whole of Frensham C.C. as many of the stalwarts of Hetairoi were being rested (by themselves) having contributed to a victorious 2023 Suffolk tour. After the customary scramble for players the team that emerged with just 48 hours to spare exceeded the specifications of founding father Chris Megone, with 8/11^{ths} of the team under 30-years-young! With a team made up of two sets of brothers, a father and son, classmates and housemates, it could be dubbed the 'Friends and Family Special'.

The two captains walked out to the middle for the coin toss, and were greeted by a batsman's paradise, fantastically prepared by the groundsman, and baked to perfection by the sun. "Tails" was the call, tails it was, first blood to H.C.C.. As expected, Thathapudi elected to post a score in the 40 over limit. However, F.C.C. were on a high after celebrating their division winning thirds. H.C.C. were hoping they had over-indulged in their celebrations.

It was clear that H.C.C. weren't pulling any punches, as they sent out two recognised batsmen to start proceedings in John Ball and Christopher Egan. The F.C.C. skipper, M. Findlay, decided to counter by opening the attack with two young guns. The quicks repaid their captain's faith, by giving all they had, however the fielders had succumbed to the heat of the Indian Summer and aftereffects of the previous evening's activities, perhaps not in equal measure. The opening pair respected any good balls but dispatched anything loose to the boundary. Christopher eagers scoring rate saw him to his fifty at a strike rate of 100.00. Not to be out done, John E. Ball decided to 'Think of a Number' for the first-wicket partnership, and that number was 133, having scored 49, 22 overs and six bowlers into the H.C.C. innings.

The second wicket partnership of C. Egan and Dylan Yatigamma was a reunion of Royal Grammar School (RGS) alumni openers. Dylan was one of four left-handers in the Hetairoi arsenal, and the left-hand-right-hand combination was irritating the beleaguered hosts. With the second drinks break still four overs away, Findlay needed to take the heat out of the run machine and set the thermostat to

“Frosty” as the eighth bowling option. It worked! Frost went on to be the top wicket taker for F.C.C returning figures of 3-17.

Thathers decided to ignore Oscar “Ozzy” Fletcher’s claims of “being more of a bowler”, and sent in the left-hander to replace Dylan, to continue to frustrate the bowler and fielders alike. The ploy worked and Ozzy went on to score an unbeaten 29. The highlight of his innings came when backward-point challenged him to hit a six and he duly obliged the very next ball, dispatching the last ball of their skipper’s spell back over the bowler’s head. Christopher went on to score a valiant 81, before Clayton-Jones was rewarded for his accuracy by dislodging the bails.

With the score on 172, and still five wickets in hand, the Hetairoi middle-order were given carte blanche to express themselves, which they did scoring at 7 runs per over for the last ten overs, including Rafe Studholme’s cameo of 17 off just ten balls. Hetairoi total 242-7.

With the R.R.R. at just over a run a ball the Hetairoi skipper wanted the scoreboard pressure to be a growing concern throughout the Frensham innings and opted for the miserly bowling of Richard, who’s Southwold tour figures emulated a certain Ebenezer Scrooge.

Similar to the protagonist of Charles Dickens, Richard was visited by the ghost of cricket-wide, and then the ghost of cricket-no-ball, before correcting the error of his ways.

Richard slayed any hopes of F.C.C. with the third ball of the over. The number one batsman’s head sunk as he saw his poorly timed shot en-route to the hands of Christopher Egan at cover, out for a duck. Arther Studholme, also fresh from not having to bat, dismissed their number two in the second over, by feeding the stumps a cherry. The left-hand-right-hand combinations of the bowling cartel seemed to be wreaking havoc too.

The opening bowlers were supported by some excellent fielding, notably by the Royal Grammar Swarm of Dylan Yatigamma, Sebastien Maxwell and the brothers Egan. Their efforts caused the batsmen to reassess quick singles. However, after the initial set back, Frensham managed to get to the first (of two) drinks break without any further casualties having consolidated 55 runs. This was largely thanks to their number four batsman Mohammed Hashir.

True to the adage, drinks did indeed bring a wicket, Rafe claiming his first scalp of four thanks to a low catch taken well by the vertically unchallenged R. Slade. Rafe was into his rhythm and at the half-way point of the innings found the edge of Doran’s bat. At this point the scorer would usually be struggling with the spelling of Thathapudi as they enter ‘Ct.’ in the How Out column...but this time the successful gloveman was the ink-saving Alex Egan. Rafe took his third wicket in the last over of his first spell, duplicating his brother by rearranging the batsman’s furniture. With the romantic Ozzy bowling a maiden over, the R. R. R. had crept into double figures.

Without his partner in crime, Stephen “Matthers” Matthews, Thathers’ strategy to take pace off to break up an obdurate sixth wicket duo proved futile. The partnership going on to be worth 97 runs, with 86 courtesy of M. Hashir, who was profiting from the lightning-fast outfield, and dealing in boundaries. Mo by name mow by nature.

When Hashir celebrated a well-deserved maiden century of the season in the 29th over, he had also brought Frensham back into contention for the win, as he was sustaining the required run rate of 10rpo, for as long as he had a foil.

At the second drinks break the Friends and Family Special had a conflag à la Family Fortunes, and to have eyes on the prize we would need to use all twenty-two eyes and eleven cricket brains to see the game from all angles. Alex who had the batters-eye view was marshalling the field as the low Surrey sun was becoming a factor for those even with sunnies. Ozzy, batsman-come-bowler-come-caddy advised his skip which implement to use to extract the remaining five wickets. The assumption is that his knowledge of Callaways is second only to his knowledge of Studholmes, being a housemate of Arthur and friend of Rafe.

As promised by Ozzy, Arthur started his second spell by clean bowling M. Shine, putting an end to the sixth wicket. Hetairoi were well and truly into the tail, but with Hashir still at the crease, the win, no matter how improbable, was still possible for Frensham. Hashir’s commitment to the cause was emphasised as a mobile phone was brought out to the middle, only to see him reject a call from his boss wondering why he was over an hour late for his night shift!

Running late, running out of light, and running out of partners finally got to Hashir and Arthur forced him to sky a catch to Janaka Yatigamma at mid-wicket who gleefully took the victory-sealing catch... at the second time of asking... eventually showing the youngsters (including Junior) that he’s still got it!

One brought two, and Arthur was on a hat-trick after dismissing their number nine. The hat-trick didn’t transpire, but that only served to motivate Ozzy to get an invite to the wicket-takers party. Whilst many Hetairoi may have switched off knowing the victory was a formality, Alex Egan proved why he used to keep-wicket for Bucks. at his age group, and stumped his counterpart with Dhoni-esque speed.

Not to be outdone, Rafe matched his brother’s wicket tally by taking a wicket in his eighth and final over, bowling out the Frensham C. C. captain before he could trouble the scorers, ending the F.C.C innings 43 runs short of their target.

Special thanks go to Alex Warren and Adam Page and the rest of the Frensham Cricket Club for hosting us so hospitably, and playing in a manner that exemplified the spirit of the game.

Some would say that cricket was the real winner, but they would be wrong: it was The Hetairoi!