

Sudbourne Hall CC vs Hetairoi CC at Sudbourne Hall, Tuesday 1st September 2026

Another beautiful Sudbourne day. Warm in the sunshine, a bit breezy, some signs of green around the ground following the recent rain.

A challenging Hetairoi side to manage. Six oldies, of whom three were also crocked, four speedy fielders, and one more reasonably quick still, and reliable. BUT we had no w/k and needed one of our speedsters to act as w/k. In fact Sam did twenty two overs (very well) and Will did twenty overs (also well). But no real way to hide all our oldies, so a very mixed fielding side, fragile batting, but strong bowling once again.

Sudbourne won the toss and put us in. Brian had thoughtfully brought his kit, and should perhaps have deputised for one of our injured players, but was also all in place for another meticulous day's scoring. We started on time at 1.00 pm, though SHCC were still nine, with their two star performers still to arrive. A time game, with 20 overs from 5.45.

John M and Will Ball opened the batting against an off spinner turned medium pace at one end, and one time paceman Charlie Jackson, now turned spinner, at the other. John and Will batted nicely until Will got a nick to be caught behind by their good keeper. 28 for 1. We had hoped for a larger opening stand.

The first of the Indian arrivals took over from Charlie J, bowling decent medium pace, but John and Mike progressed steadily and reached drinks undefeated. Then they moved on to 75 off 25 overs, before John M flashed outside off and was caught at slip for a steady 31. 75 for 2 was a fair foundation, and Mike P was settling in, but our fragile batting now threatened to be exposed.

Chris M came in at 4 and was actually helped by the fact that SHCC now brought on their Gudjarat Premier League off-spinner, the best spinner he had seen for many years. He could have run through us, so it was imperative that Chris and Mike kept him out and scored runs off a younger bowler at the other end. The shot Chris enjoyed most was in fact hitting the Indian star over mid-on (just) for four. But he still bowled eight overs for 8 runs ...

However we were getting runs at the other end, even ten off an over once, so the partnership built steadily. SHCC were bowling overs quickly but it was a time game. Eventually Dusty White bowled Chris for 28, but the stand had been 90 and Hetairoi were 165 for 3 and approaching a defensible target. Sam came in but could not repeat the previous days heroics, and was bowled for 0 two balls later. Ben hit a nice four but was dismissed for 6, then Clive produced his trade mark lofted on-drive for two singles and we closed at 180 for 5. SHCC had bowled 50 overs. We left them 80 minutes and 20 overs, so a run a minute and five runs an over in the last hour, a fair declaration. (In fact we would have bowled 43 overs, I think.)

A third very good tea, and by this time the Hetairoi travelling support, aged six months to 95 years, had arrived and could share in the goodies.

Ben Y and Will B opened the bowling, and not only bowled tightly but got through their overs quickly, so that after twelve overs in just over half an hour SHCC were 16 for 1 with Ben removing one of the openers clean bowled with a lovely ball. Sam was doing a great job behind the wickets and the accuracy of the bowling meant our ageing fielders were not yet exposed.

The fall of the first wicket brought in the first Indian who played carefully at first. Then Ben removed the other opener and their young w/k came in. Mike Price was brought on to replace Will with the score 22 for 2. It might have been possible to take another spinning option, but the Indian was obviously very adept at playing any form of spin. At any rate he tucked in to Mike's bowling with at least one mighty six and two fours in the first over and then more in the second. Suddenly SHCC were off, and our grip on control of the game was under threat as they reached about 50 for 2 with plenty of time and overs left.

John Megone replaced Ben after the latter's excellent spell, and Will B came back at Mike's end after just a two over break. But the Indian was now in, and he and his partner were exploiting the fielders with fast running between the wickets. Will, John, and Ben, supported by Mike, were doing heroics as they hared around the large Sudbourne outfield trying to cover for the inadequacies of the rest of us. But SHCC were motoring towards 80. John was having to bowl hard and then chase back to long on to save a boundary. Will was also seeing balls go under fielder's feet to the boundary.....

Then the number four hit an extra cover drive like a shell off John ... but straight at Ben who took an excellent catch. The third wicket had fallen after 23 overs just on the break for the last hour. Will hastily put on the gloves that Sam had ably donned.

Sam came on at the bottom end, and bowled fast. Early in Will's period with the gloves the Indian number 3 got an inside edge, but Will could not hang on. Perhaps that would be crucial in our defeat

At the other end the other Indian had come in at five. He was clearly nothing like so quick between the wickets, nor such an accomplished bat. Now a controversy began. There was a flurry of conversation in Gudjarati and suddenly number 5 needed a runner, due to a hamstring injury apparently. We demurred. They withdrew the request. But then Sam bowled the number 3. About 100 for 4. And they asked again. So now they had two fast runners at the wicket.

Although not cultured, the Indian number 5 was a hitter and, with two fast men doing his running, runs flowed again. But his batting showed no sign of a hamstring issue as he

danced down the wicket or played a reverse sweep. It looked as if we had been conned, and some grumpiness ensued.

Then he hit Sam over extra cover. John M chased back to the ball which had plugged. The young speedsters looked for two, but John had turned and his throw came in like a bullet over the top of the bails to Will who whipped them off and the Indian and his runner were gone. End of controversy.

John Ball was now bowling at the top end, and is having the bowling season of his life, I think. Sam was steaming in, and got even more fired up when an Lbw appeal was turned down. But the SHCC number six was going well and they still had plenty of batting, needing only about 40 runs at less than 3.5 an over. But then the number 6 advanced, missed John's looping leggy and was stumped by Will. Definitely out of his ground, but did Will take the ball in front of the wicket? No VAR to check. Anyhow he was out.

The young number 7 was keeping Sam out with determination, and taking some runs off John, but then he fell to the Ball wizardry too. Trying to hit the turning ball through cover he got underneath it and lobbed the gentlest of catches towards cover. The Hetairoi turned to watch as the ball made its way ever so gently, bobbled in the hands, and then stuck!! Mirabile dictu, David F had clung on to the catch....

Ben Young now replaced Sam for the last three overs from the bottom end. The following over from John Ball the SHCC captain also tried to go down the wicket to JB and was also stumped by WB. Then Charlie Jackson got a leading edge and Ben took the catch. 171 for 9 with three overs left. The number 7 still in and playing well, turns the ball to Clive at backward square leg. Dusty White calls him for a single. Then Dusty White advances to JB, and is stumped by WB.

To my amazement we had won. The game is a bit of a blur. There were so many things to think about in captaining that day, and no doubt mistakes were made, but in the end we had got it right overall. And it was one of those games where every run counted. So Ollie Fryer not giving up as his damaged knees and back wanted him to do, saved two runs inches from the cover boundary. Mike Price with a wonderful one handed stop on the long on boundary saved two runs, John haring back to long on off his own bowling saved one run, and the good w/ks saved many runs, and so on; all enough to give us that eight run victory, finishing at 7.15 as the sun shone wicket to wicket as it always does towards the end at Sudbourne.

And so surprisingly enough we had won two and lost one on tour. And the young ones slept well that night.

CM 3.9.26