

Division 1 Denmark U13s lose to spirited Switzerland

3 big wins, one loss and a draw for young Swiss cricketers in Copenhagen

Switzerland's Under 13 squad travelled to Copenhagen at the beginning of August for a 5-match tour, playing a Zealand XI, which included 7 of the national team, three times before challenging the national team in two matches at the impressive Svanholm national ground.

With 3 big wins, one loss and a draw the Swiss minnows, whose squad was a mixture of experience, newcomers and some still very young players not yet out of the U11s, can be more than delighted with their overall performance against a country with vastly superior resources, playing numbers and experience. In fact the young Swiss team will be virtually unchanged next year with only 2 players leaving the U13 team.

This was a Switzerland that was prepared to take the game to the opposition, to dominate the opposition's bowling and to score runs quickly and confidently, but also patiently and carefully if the situation so demanded. And although two of our top players (Josh Bayliss (Basel) and Ashwin Vinod (GRYCC) were missing from the squad, others were prepared to step up and make themselves be counted in a team that worked hard for one another in the field, that could take wickets when called upon to bowl, that took their catches, and that could all score runs and build partnerships with the bat. It was impressive and at times they were so dominant and rampant that one wondered if this was really Switzerland playing against the Danes.

"Denmark are a Division 1 country in Europe, playing in the same league as Scotland, Ireland and Holland so we are delighted how well our juniors are performing," coach Patrick Henderson said. "It was quite an experience for the squad playing on a full size grass wicket and they were all great ambassadors for Switzerland and Swiss cricket."

The matches:

Monday 2nd August. Switzerland won by 8 wickets

The tour kicked off with a 40-over match at Svanholm on a superbly prepared grass wicket against Zealand. On an overcast morning the hosts elected to bat first, but were soon regretting it when Switzerland's Ruwan Jayakody claimed his first five-for in his first bowling spell of 4 overs (5-13)

Wickets continued to tumble and Switzerland's bowling was giving away nothing (Henderson 2-13, Boakes 1-3, Palmiero 1-15 and Puvimanasinghe 1-6), while catches were taken by Henderson, Creba-Wright and Jayakody. With none of the Danish batsmen able to halt the onslaught and build any kind of partnership the hosts were bowled out cheaply for 64 after just 17 overs.

Defending their modest total was always going to be tough for Zealand and the Swiss openers Favotto and Sinh got off to a solid start, patiently chipping away at the total. Fransen and Boakes finished off where the others left off and the team was never in danger as the Swiss strode confidently to a morale-boosting 8-wicket first match win.

Monday 2nd August. Switzerland drew against Zealand

In the afternoon, the second match, a T20, saw the Swiss bat first. An aggressive and confident 68 by opener Henderson, who batted through the whole 20 overs, enabled the Swiss to post a decent 110 total. He was ably assisted by Palmiero in a 4th wicket blistering stand of 49 in just five overs.

Unfortunately, the rain was to stop the match during Zealand's reply, which with 77 runs on the board after 13 overs was threatening to go dangerously close in the final few overs. Solid bowling by Palmiero (1-7) and Puvimanasinghe (1-8), still with overs to bowl may well have been able to contain the big-hitting Raja (45 not out).

The steady rainfall meant the match had to be abandoned and ended in a draw.

Tuesday 3rd August. Switzerland won by 52 runs

At the huge Glostrup ground Switzerland were put into bat against hosts Zealand. With such a large outfield it was going to be difficult to find the boundary and batsmen were going to have to do a lot of running. In fact, all match only one boundary was scored.

A patient opening stand of 24 by Sinh and Favotto got us underway before both were caught off spinner Larsen. A staunch innings by Henderson (24) kept the batting together, and Sandu and Jayakody added valuable runs to push us to 115 at the end of our 40 overs.

Although Switzerland had made every effort to put runs on the board, our score nonetheless looked a little undercooked, but the tight bowling and fielding ring of steel ensured that Zealand never got anywhere close and were bowled out for 63 runs.

Once the openers had fallen to Palmiero and Puvimanasinghe, and big-hitting batsman Raja skied a good length ball off Henderson who calmly took the catch to great delight of his teammates, the resistance all but ended. The catching, as so often has been the case with this squad of players, was outstanding and Kratky, Henderson, Favotto, Sinh and Creba-Wright all held on to their opportunities.

It was Sandu (2-3) and Henderson (4-17) who mopped up the tail ruthlessly, while Puvimanasinghe was probably the pick of the Swiss bowling (3-14) with his excellent off-spinners, which Danish batsmen throughout the week struggled in vain to master.

Wednesday 4th August. Switzerland won by 67 runs

With the team's confidence ahead of the 40-over encounter at Svanholm against the national U13 side at an all-time high Switzerland opted to bat first. Already in the first few overs Denmark was clearly making hard work of their encounter against underdogs Switzerland. Inconsistent and poor bowling was immediately punished by opener Favotto who quickly marched to 58 before being run out.

The damage had been done and with the bat the Swiss U13s then showed considerable maturity and staying power in batting out their overs. In the middle of their innings the Danish bowling settled and runs became more difficult to steal for Puvimanasinghe, Creba-Wright and Fransen. But their patience paid off and with the bowling tiring in the final 15 overs Swiss Henderson (36) launched an aggressive sustained batting assault on the bowling aided by Boakes, Palmiero (13) and Jayakody that was to add 100 runs to the total. All the Swiss

batsmen had managed to forge partnerships of 20 runs or more. Their opponents looked shell-shocked and failed to halt the charge.

The Danes were asked to chase down 190. The task looked daunting, and was not helped by the loss of early wickets. It was Palmiero who grabbed an early breakthrough (3-13). There was initial resistance by captain Uddin (24), but the Swiss bowlers were on fire and wickets were falling at regular intervals. Together with Palmiero, Puvimanasinghe (3-14) and Favotto (3-18) were the pick of the bowlers. Again we hung on to our catches (Jayakody (2), Creba-Wright and Fransen), Puvimanasinghe taking a one-handed blinder at slip. And with the superbly dependable wicket-keeper Fransen and captain Creba-Wright the fielding was impressive with nothing getting through Boakes, Kratky, Sinh and Burnham's safe hands.

Denmark were all out for 122 after 32 overs and Switzerland had recorded an historic victory, one that the players will relish for a long time and rightly so. They had proved that they could play as a tight-knit outfit, work unselfishly hard, show admirable spirit, and play good cricket.

Thursday 5th August. Switzerland lost by 35 runs

The final match against the national Danish side saw Switzerland win the toss and put the hosts in to bat for their 40 overs. The Danish openers meant business and were clearly keen to make amends for the defeats of the previous few days. Our bowling lacked penetration in the early stages and the Danes were able to knuckle down. A first wicket stand of 65 put the Swiss bowlers under pressure, but once spinner Sinh (2-20) and a magnificent Puvimanasinghe (4-23) had removed Uddin and Alam the wickets fell regularly and they were unable to build any further partnerships after their steady start.

Again our fielding proved a huge strength with catches taken by Fransen (2), Jayakody, Creba-Wright, Sinh (2), Puvimanasinghe and an astonishing reaction catch at short-leg by Henderson. After 16 overs we gave little away as the scoreboard ticked along quietly to 148 after 35 overs when they were all out.

Our reply was immediate with Favotto (32) and Sinh yet again rising to the occasion, this time with a 49-run partnership. However, the chase then faltered, getting bogged down by some tight Danish bowling. A patient innings by Jakakody (13) assisted by Puvimanasinghe saw the run-rate rising steadily, and despite some resistance the side suffered a mini-collapse at the end leaving us 35 runs short after 37 overs.

Our thanks go to the Danish organisers for inviting and hosting us, in particular Simon Talbot, to Svanholm CC for the accommodation at the clubhouse, the umpires who readily gave helpful advice to our players, Glen for his superb wickets, the Swiss parents for their help and support, and every one of the Swiss squad for their team spirit, and readiness and willingness to listen and learn. Finally, thanks go to the captain Neil Creba-Wright who led his side by example in the field, absorbing the pressure and displaying calm authority.

The Swiss squad: Alex Burnham (ZCCC), James Boakes (ZCCC), Alex Favotto (ZCCC), Scott Fransen (GRYCC), Simon Henderson (ZCCC), Ruwan Jayakody (Basel), Paulina Kratky (ZCCC), Anthony Palmiero (ZCCC), Marishque Puvimanasinghe (GRYCC), Arnav Sandu (Cossonay), Jai Sinh (Cossonay), Neil Creba-Wright (capt) (Basel)

Statistics

Bowling	Overs	Wickets	Runs	Avg	RPO
A Palmiero	24	6	70	11.67	2.92
R Jayakody	23	8	107	13.38	4.65
S Henderson	31	8	102	12.75	3.29
A Favotto	10	5	63	12.60	6.30
N Creba-Wright	2	2	20	10.00	10.00
A Sandu	3	2	7	3.50	2.33
J Sinh	5	2	30	15.00	6.00
M Puvi	23	12	65	5.42	2.83
J Boakes	1	1	3	3.00	3.00

Batting	Innings	Not out	Total	Average
A Favotto	4		118	29.50
J Sinh	4		24	6.00
M Puvi	5	1	27	6.75
S Fransen	4	1	24	8.00
J Boakes	4	1	16	5.33
A Sandu	3	1	20	10.00
S Henderson	4	2	138	69.00
N Creba-Wright	4		17	4.25
A Burnham	4		6	1.50
P Kratky	3		3	1.00
A Palmiero	4	1	23	7.67
R Jayakody	4	1	22	7.33

Catches

A Favotto	1
J Sinh	3
M Puvi	2
S Fransen -WK	3
S Henderson	4
N Creba-Wright	4
P Kratky	1
R Jayakody	5