

Match report – Against Basel Dragons at Home, 19th Nov 2011

by Brijesh Luthra

19th November saw the Zurich crickets U9 team host the Basel dragons for their first match of the 2011 winter season. The match venue was the Zurich Hottingen Gym, probably used for the first time for a match against a visiting team.

Many of the budding cricketers of Basel dragons and Zurich crickets arrived well before 0900, the scheduled start of the match. Knowing no club boundaries, they immediately engaged in a friendly practice game of cricket which was full of banter- sneaky trick balls, the stumps being moved at the last moment by the wicketkeeper, the batsman's bat being held by a fielder to avoid him hitting the ball etc.

Sharp at 0900 the Zurich captain for the day Antar Ghazoul shook hands with the Basel captain (whose name I have conveniently forgotten!). The toss was won by Basel, who decided to bat. The match was to be a 14 over a side affair, with teams batting in pairs. Each pair to face 3 overs each and the last lone batsman (since this was 9 a side game) facing 2 overs.

On that day, it was the Zurich crickets' immaculate bowling and fielding was the highlight. Luca Patel bowled the perfect first over. Bowling on and around the off stump, hardly giving the batsman any room to play, and the trend continued with all the other bowlers. Thanks to their brilliant fielding and throwing, they affected as many as 10 run-outs and 2 catches! Most of the run-outs were direct hits to the stumps, which speaks volumes of their fielding abilities, quick thinking and sharp accurate throws.

Thanks to excellent bowling and fielding by Zurich, the Basel dragons were kept to a very manageable 86 runs from their allocated 14 overs. Of this 44 runs were attributed to the 21 wides and 1 no ball.

Considering some of the earlier games, this ratio is a huge improvement. The standout bowlers were Luca, Harry, Aryan and Antar who gave away only 5 wides and a no ball between them in their 8 overs and hardly went for any runs.

Zeki and Aryan opened the batting for the Zurich Crickets and put on 23 runs in their allotted 3 overs with some sharp running between the wickets and a full bloodied cover drive for 4 runs by Aryan. The strong batting continued with all the pairs. Thanks to the good calling and sharp running of the Zurich Batsmen, the Basel dragons were not able to produce a single run-out. Although the Zurich crickets did hit a reasonable number of balls in the air, and catches by the Basel fielders accounted for all the 5 dismissals for Zurich. Almost everyone reached double figures.

With only 2 runs left to win, Antar was called on as the last batsman to do the honors and score the winning runs. He promptly obliged by hitting his first ball for a straight driven four, thus ensuring a comfortable win.

Thanks to the speed with which both the Zurich and Basel bowlers went through their overs, the match was over by 1010 hrs. Since we had booked the hall till 1100 Hrs., we Basel and Zurich coaches agreed to stage another short match, to get the most of this opportunity.

The next match was to be a max of 7 overs a side. The key difference to the first match being that any batsman getting out would really be dismissed and be replaced by another batsman, unlike the previous match where the dismissed batsman would change ends.

Zurich won the toss this time and elected to bat. None of the Zurich batsmen got out in their innings, so it became tricky for me as the umpire and coach to rotate the batsman. Nevertheless, the batsmen were rotated to ensure a reasonably equal share of the batting. Dayn and Aryan excelled with the bat in this short innings scoring 22 and 10 respectively, peppered with 2 stinging fours and a towering Six. Zurich ended at 46 runs from their 7 overs, a challenging score for Basel.

Basel was very good in their reply and one of their batsmen Ethan, rattled up 20 runs in quick time. While Zurich crickets were not able to affect any run outs in this innings, but they took 4 very good catches. Their bowling was on top again with only 7 wides & no balls in the 7 overs. The match got quite close in the end with only 5 runs needed from the last over for Basel to win. Antar was called on to bowl the last over and try and contain the Basel dragons. The last batsman from Basel found Antar's accuracy too much to handle and was only able to score 1 run off the first 4 balls, which came from a no ball. The penultimate ball was hit hard towards the side wall. Dayn put in a dive to stop the ball from hitting from the wall, thus keeping the batsman to only one run. With 3 runs needed to win from the last ball and two runs to tie, tension were running high as Antar ran in. But the batsman was only able to tap the ball to a close-in fielder for a dot ball.

The Zurich crickets sprang up in jubilation and the celebration was akin to India winning the cricket world cup. All the crickets shook hands with each other and enjoyed some excellent cakes brought in the Kirsten Hudson (Thanks Kirsten!) as a just reward for 2 matches won in a single day.

