

Gladiators v. Gentlemen of West London

Sunday 30 June, King's House. Gents won toss. Dull, 20C

Won by 2 wickets

Gladiators		Gentlemen of West London	
D. Shah		b Krishna	16
Khanderwhal	c Puli	b Chatharaju	29
*†Bhandari		b S. Patel	3
Bhudia	c Chatharaju	b H. Patel	58
Mehta	run out (R. Patel)		20
Bhankaria	c Chatharaju	b Gulati	8
F. Shah	c R. Patel	b Arikatla	20
Arjan		b H. Patel	0
Singhavi	lbw	b H. Patel	15
Ranka	c Sudireddy	b R. Patel	12
Sheth	not out		5
Extras	w24 nb2 b9		35
Total	All out	38 overs	221
FoW: 30, 54, 56, 131, 160, 160, 160, 182, 215, 221			
Bowling: Krishna 5-0-16-1, Gulati 8-0-32-1, S. Patel 6-0-34-1, Chatharaju 6-0-28-1, H. Patel 6-0-49-3, Puli 3-0-26-0, R. Patel 2-0-11-1, Arikatla 2-0-16-1			
R. Patel	run out (Mehta)		1
Krishna	lbw	b Randa	17
Dubey	c Bhandari	b Mehta	4
Parvathaneni	c Ranka	b F. Shah	64
Gulati	not out		75
Arikatla	st Bhandaria	b Mehta	3
*†Sudireddy		b Mehta	0
Puli	lbw	b Mehta	7
Chatharaju	c Ranka	b Khanderwhal	19
S. Patel	not out		10
H. Patel	dnb		
Extras	w15 nb2 b4 lb2		23
Total	8 wickets	37.3 overs	223
FoW: 5, 19, 76, 102, 113, 113, 135, 175			
Bowling: Khanderwhal 7.3-0-43-1, Mehta 8-0-41-4, Singhavi 8-0-39-0, Bhankaria 2-0-14-0, Randa 4-0-26-1, F. Shah 4-1-24-1, Sheth 4-0-30-0			



Only once in their 35 years have Gents successfully chased a bigger total. They did so here thanks to brilliant innings from Parvathaneni (10 fours and two sixes) and Gulati (11 fours and one six), assisted by resilient batting by the tail and, up top, a dogged and entirely fitting opener's knock by Krishna. The game was marred by bad blood between the sides that culminated in an ugly jostle, though an uneasy truce was brokered and the match concluded.

This should not detract one jot from a perfectly-judged run chase. Only briefly did the required run-rate exceed seven and there were 15 balls in hand at 7.30pm when, in poor light, Gulati drove the match-winning four to huge applause from the boundary.

Gladiators, a Middlesex Sunday League side, offered this fixture when Sheen Park bailed. They fielded a mixture of 1s and 2s. Gents caught poorly in the first 20 overs, dropped Bhudia three times, and the hosts were handily placed at 131-3 in the 26th. One that stuck was Puli's off Chatharaju to dismiss southpaw Khanderwhal.

Wickets then fell regularly, starting with a run out by R. Patel. Chatharaju distinguished himself with two catches in three balls (what a fine game he would have), the first an athletic running effort as good as Puli's an hour before. H. Patel took three wickets. Others were shared around. On a patchy outfield the fielding improved steadily throughout the afternoon. Gladiators' 221, the highest by an opponent in 2024, was bulked by 35 extras including 24 wides. Despite Test match wides having been agreed between the captains, extras would become a serious bone of contention in the second innings.

The Gents recovered well from the trauma of losing R. Patel to a run out on the eighth ball and Dubey nicking off four overs later. Krishna, relishing the opener's role with his studious forward defensives, and Parvathaneni were batting well together when Khanderwhal and Bhandari went up for a caught behind off the giant. Not out, said umpire S. Patel. There then followed ugly scenes reminiscent of Bricklayer's Arms in 2021 as Bhandari charged up the pitch, screamed and swore at the umpire. Other Gladiators joined in. Several Gents ran fully fifty yards to get involved and it looked as if the game might have to be abandoned, but play resumed after 15 minutes, the atmosphere tense and crackling.

Matters then went against the Gents, Krishna, Parvathaneni, Arikatla and Sudireddy falling in the next seven overs, 113-6, Gulati 11*. How pleasurable it is to record what happened next. Puli, a tough player, got in line and batted sensibly, driving two threes. He was pinned in front of his stumps by a shooter at 135 after 26.1 overs, 87 needed off 83 balls, three wickets to fall.

Enter Chatharaju to join Gulati on 26*. He counter-attacked from the word go, blazing two fours and running very well. The shift in momentum from this point was tangible. The Gladiators almost had the game won but their previously immaculate ground-fielding became porous, a Mehta no-ball beamer was pulled for four, catches were dropped, and wides were bowled and contested too loudly: 40 had come up in 55 balls when Chatharaju was caught on long-on with Gulati 41*, 175-8. He had served his team superbly all day in the field, with the ball and with the bat. His new cap looked good too.

Enter S. Patel with Gents needing 47 off six. Gulati took over 35 bowled by Sheth for three fours. With two leg-byes it was 189-8. S. Patel took a four and a two off Khan's next two balls. Another Gulati four and it was 202-8 off 36. Sheth's final over of off-spin went for a two from S. Patel, two wides, and two more Gulati fours and a single last ball (off which he was dropped by long-off) to retain the strike, 215-8. He took Khanderwhal for straight-driven fours off the second and third balls to end 75*, a masterly knock. The eighth and ninth wickets had added 88 and Gents had won a famous victory. Gladiators sought out the scorer and shook his hand but there was no further interaction between the teams.