

Whalers v. Gentlemen of West London

Sunday 7 July, Barn Elms ST. Gents won toss. Rainy, 17C

Won by 9 wickets

Whalers			Gentlemen of West London			
†Johnston	not out		116	A. Ahmed	not out	88
Prabal	c Kulasingam	b S. Patel	11	Gulati	Lbw	80
Kushwaha	lbw	b Kota	0	Kota	not out	0
Nirmal		b Kulasingam	14	R. Patel, †Puli, Krishna, Dubey, *Sudireddy, Kulasingam, S. Patel and H. Patel dnb		
*Sanga		b Kulasingam	0			
Raman		b Kulasingam	10			
†Rohan	not out		17			
Abhinav, Sourabh, Bilal and Vishal dnb						
Extras	w6 b1		7	Extras	w8 nb1 b1 lb1	11
Total	5 wickets	25 overs	175	Total	1 wicket	22.4 overs
FoW: 18, 25, 69, 69, 106				FoW: 173		
Bowling: Kota 5-0-25-1, S. Patel 4-2-16-1, Dubey 5-0-43-0, Kulasingam 5-0-23-3, Krishna 3-0-31-0, H. Patel 3-0-36-0				Bowling: Bilal 5-0-46-1, Vishal 3.4-0-30-0, Abhinav 3-0-21-0, Sourabh 3-0-22-0, Rohan 5-0-15-0, Raman 3-0-43-0		



Australian Dean Johnston scored a century of the highest quality, 116* off 71 balls with 14 fours and a six, but Gents won their eleventh successive victory with a compelling opening stand of 173 by Aamir Ahmed and Vinitesh Gulati, a club record. It was a frantic match from start to finish much enjoyed by Gents and their young hosts. With their efforts to get the game on, their warm welcome and their buoyancy in defeat, Whalers exemplified the Spirit of Cricket.

Early exchanges saw a balanced contest between bat and ball, Kulasingam's low catch diving forward from deep mid-wicket the highlight for the Gents, S. Patel the bowler. Revenge for him after Prabal had smitten him for a four and a towering six in his first over. Johnston was fluent but club secretary Kushwaha fell for a duck, pinned by the Kota off-break. It is many matches since the Gents opened the attack with spin.

Thunder, lightning and heavy rain drove the players from the field with Whalers 40-2 off 8.5, Johnston sharing an entertaining story of a Sydney Grade match in which several fielders were frazzled, though mercifully they survived. It looked all up but the ground has covers, promptly brought into play by Whalers. The different ground authority at Barn Elms Sports Centre five hundred yards away had pulled their games at 11 o'clock. LB Merton had cancelled the weekend's cricket early Saturday morning. It looked grim.

But the rain relented, the bowler's run ups dried under the sun and play restarted after 75 minutes. The overs were reduced by captains Sanga and Sudireddy from 35 to 25, a format that would perhaps favour the chasing side. Kulasingam deserved his three wickets but left-hander Johnston almost single-handed enabled Whalers to put up a commanding total compiled at a round sevens. His placement was impeccable and he gave only one chance, a stinger to short fine-leg. He accelerated, Rohan gave him stout support, the pair ran like demons and 67 came off the final six overs, the bowlers and fielders powerless to prevent the carnage. Johnston's century was his 15th for Whalers and the tenth best by an opponent.

Sudireddy weighed up the risks and rewards and put his three biggest hitters up top, banking on a fast start without too much damage in the wickets column. His decision, influenced by a benign, true pitch, was vindicated to the maximum.

In improving light Ahmed (88* off 62 with 11 fours and two sixes) and Gulati (80 off 75 with eight fours and two sixes) ploughed ahead of the required rate after three overs and never relinquished control, though several bowlers, the speedy Rohan in particular, posed challenges. The consistency of the batting was remarkable: the first three five-over segments went for 41, 34 and 37 runs. Overs 16 to 20 went for 48 by which time the thing was nearly done. A quiet over would be followed by one or two boundaries and the required rate slowly declined. The killer over was No.18, savaged for 21. This left Gents seven overs to score 34 and from that point there was no way back for Whalers. Gulati's back-foot cover driving was immaculate: Ahmed's straight driving masterly.

Gulati fell leg-before after 21.5 overs, Kota blocked the sixth ball before Ahmed drove a two and a four off the returning Vishal to claim the victory. His 88* is his highest score for GWLCC, previously 77* *v.* Mpingwe in 2021. Sanjay Patel, who knows his cricket, thought it the finest opening partnership he had ever seen.

Johnston's hundred was the 31st by an opponent and the seventh in a losing cause. Only S. Desai has achieved this for the Gents, against Close PF. This was the Gent's fourth win in four at Barn Elms ST. The game against Salix in 2023 here was won by an identical margin and also saw a record stand courtesy of Dubey and Kota. The Gents' first-wicket record stand, previously 121 by Bignell and Hubbocks *v.* Enterprise in 1993, was only their sixth partnership of 100 or more for this wicket in the 690 matches played. Opponents have 15.

The current generation of players are well represented in the list with Gulati, Kota and Sudireddy appearing twice. The oldest extant record was set in 1993. Four date from the last three seasons.

Record partnerships by wicket – Gents

1	173	A. Ahmed (88*) and V. Gulati (80) <i>v.</i> Whalers	Barn Elms ST	7.7.24
2	156*	N. Dubey (62*) and P. Kota (86*) <i>v.</i> Salix	Barn Elms ST	18.6.23
3	168	P. Kota (160*) and S. Namilikonda (76) <i>v.</i> Squirrels	Old Tenisonians CC	17.7.22
4	162	H. Desai (46) and R. Lall (128) <i>v.</i> London Saints	Old Haberdashers CC	14.8.11
5	152	M. Ashton (102) and M. Hughes (57*) <i>v.</i> London Saints	Victoria RG	15.8.93
6	212*	J. Small (131*) and S. Kumar (74*) <i>v.</i> St Anne's Allstars	Boston Manor PF	7.6.15
7	140	R. Sudireddy (96) and V. Gulati (66*) <i>v.</i> Kempton	Old Tenisonians CC	2.8.20
8	120	R. Sudireddy (52) and R. Chatharaju (82*) <i>v.</i> New Romney	New Romney	10.9.23
9	108	H. Hibbert (81) and M. Sciberras (22) <i>v.</i> Virgin Casuals	Shepherd's Bush CC	17.9.00
10	79*	S. Patel (73*) and R. Pentakota (31*) <i>v.</i> Salix	Imperial College	9.9.12

