

ICC World Cricket League Division Five – 3rd Place Playoff

Guernsey v Vanuatu

Played at Farmers Cricket Club Ground, St Martin (neutral venue)

on 28th May 2016 (50-over match)

Toss won by Vanuatu, who chose to field

Umpires: AJT Dowdalls (Sco) and M Hawthorne (Ire), WPM van Liemt (Neth)

Referee: DT Jukes (Eng)

Scorers: HAJ Mountford (G) D Livingston (V)

Guernsey won by 19 runs

'Nussbaumers left happy' by Rob Batiste

HIS two boys had taken seven Vanuatu wickets between them, plus three important catches, and the organisation he chairs had saved a few pennies by securing World League Five status – no wonder GCB chairman Dave Nussbaumer was beaming. A 15-run win secured Guernsey's third place in the final table and on top of the financial ramifications it was just as satisfying to see a young team take another step in their own ladder of progression. It was just sad it was against Vanuatu, one of the friendliest teams you will ever come across. The game can be a whole lot easier if your captain wins the toss from time to time, so at the start of an exhilarating day's play it was wholly understandable to see Jamie Nussbaumer walking off the pitch shaking his head after losing his fifth straight call. And with thick mist hanging over the Farmers ground and surrounding potato fields, it wasn't a surprise that Guernsey were asked to bat first. The management made two changes, with the captain and his brother Luke both returning for the injured Josh Butler and the unlucky Andy Hutchison, who bowled so well with the new ball against Oman. Guernsey kept with the same opening partnership from Friday, with GH Smit and Tom Kimber up first and the side's best batsman, Matt Stokes, back in the middle order. With the sun threatening to push through the grey skies and the national flags barely fluttering, Matautaava opened with a maiden. There was a scare in the next over as Kimber, run out by a direct hit 24 hours earlier, was still short of his ground when the throw came in and flashed just wide of the unmanned stumps.

Matautaava was on the button again in his second and any hopes of Guernsey getting off to a flier in the power play were not looking promising until Kimber raised the spirits with a crunching cover drive for the first boundary of the game

and two balls later added a second with a spanking back-foot square drive. But his joy was shortlived, Matautaava tucking him up in leg stump and square leg taking a comfortable catch as Kimber, playing his last match in island colours for a while, failed to get over the ball. That brought in Stokes, who was off the mark with a sweetly timed square drive for four off Stephen, but Matautaava continued to give nothing away in his early overs and any runs came from the other end, where Callum Blake had arrived in the attack for the eighth over and struck with his fourth ball, finding just a little bit of lift and movement to take Smit's edge and Viral took the catch. This was not the start Guernsey had hoped for and, yet again, a rebuilding job was needed. Ollie Newey was met with two snorters from Blake and with just two overs of power play left Guernsey were reeling at 22 for two. And they had another heart-in-mouth moment as Matautaava rapped Newey on the pads and the entire side went up for the appeal. Newey's long stride may have saved him, but this was a seriously tough challenge for the third-wicket pair against some good bowling.



Ollie Newey cuts the ball

Guernseysportsphotography

The pressure was eased with a clipped Stokes four behind square, which cleared the rope thanks to the first notable misfield of the first 55 min lay, at which point the impressive Matautaava got well-earned rest after six testing overs Stokes responded with a leg side pick-up from replacement seamer Stephen, which sailed out of the ground for six. Slowly the pressure was easing and the run-rate pushing towards the four an over mark, which drew a response from Vanuatu captain Andrew Mansale in the form of his own off spin. Blake was still charging in at the other end and causing problems on and just outside the off stump, and when drinks were taken the new combination had pegged Guernsey back to 49 from 16.



Matt Stokes also cuts

Guernseysportsphotography

Bit by bit the third-wicket pairing were steadying the ship and the 50 partnership came up in the 23rd over via Stokes' desperate dive into the crease after Newey called him for one from a misfield. Stokes, again, was making batting a notch easier than any colleague, but at the same time progress was slow and at the halfway point of the innings the run rate was again barely above three-an-over as the all-spin attack kept things tight and regularly challenged the umpires to answer the latest LBW call. Vanuatu, very much like the Oman team, are prolific appealers and their eagerness to get a third wicket was growing as Stokes and Newey eased along, although not without scares. Stokes might have been caught and bowled and then caught at the wicket, but both catches went down and soon enough both men were passing 50, Newey first courtesy of a neat dab to the vacant third man and Stokes, a short while later, in similar fashion.



Ollie Newey raises his 50

Guernseysportsphotography



Matt Stokes acknowledges his 50

Guernseysportsphotography

The century partnership came via a pulled four from Newey, who was now playing confidently and with a degree of style, but when he missed an attempted sweep and was struck on the toe, up went the umpire's finger. The stand had been worth 108 and laid the basis for a charge over the final third of the innings. Stokes was in sight of a century when he fell for 82 to a sensational catch by Mansale at mid-wicket and the loss of his wicket proved a bigger blow than first thought. Matautaava's return from the end, where he had barely conceded a run in his early six-over spell, slowed progress and poor Ollie Nightingale was unluckily run out by an umpire who appeared to have his finger in the air before the bails were whipped off. Some long-handle tactics were required, but not nearly so easy to achieve, against Matautaava particularly. Bowling full and fast, Matautaava was miserly. But Nussbaumer managed to blast him for one boundary through extra-cover as the 200 was passed in the 47th. The captain repeated the trick two overs later and the 49th was completed with 219 on the board.



Jamie Nussbaumer on the charge Guernseysportsphotography

Nussbaumer retained the strike and with a four through square off the last ball, his little cameo closed with 29 and a total of 230. The captain did not get much of a rest and after the 40min lunch break he was taking the new ball alongside Newey.



Jamie Nussbaumer strikes early Guernseysportsphotography

Both men opened with testing maidens and with the first ball of the captain's second he found the edge of the bat and Jason Martin took a terrific diving catch that left batsman Joshua Rasu shaking his head in disbelief. The skipper was hitting his straps and the ball plunging into Martin's gloves.



Jamie Nussbaumer celebrates a wicket

Guernseysportsphotography

He was pushing his aching body to the limit, but when he dropped short outside off stump Maututaava, one of the players of the tournament, punched a six over cover. The boundaries were flowing too freely for Guernsey's liking and after those two maidens the next five leaked 44, Newey coming in for some fierce punishment.



Luke Nussbaumer clings on to a catch

Guernseysportsphotography

Guernsey desperately need a break and they got it in the most fortuitous way – Luke Nussbaumer's short ball dropping off Dunn's body and onto the stumps. Next over skipper Mansals holed out to Nussbaumer junior and the complexion of the game had wholly changed. Or so we thought. The runs kept flowing and when Smit replaced Ellis, Maututaava tucked into some ordinary fair, crunching one hip-high full toss over long on for six. It got worse.

Smit returned for another on his first ball – a waist-high toss – cost 13 runs as Maututaava clobbered it for six and the subsequent free hit for another. The captain stepped up to bow the dangerous Maututaava and swung the game back

Guernsey's way. And when his short spell ended, back came his brother to get the wicket of Ronnie Tari – 133 for five. Guernsey put the squeeze on to the extent that by the 38th the required run rate was a run per ball, but the dangerous Nipiko remained.



Luke Nussbaumer in action

Guernseysportsphotography

By the 40th and the final drink break the rate was up to seven. Guernsey players huddled and the Vanuatu batsmen were given advice from colleagues. But the pressure was too much for the Vanuatuans and when Luke Nussbaumer captured Obed and Nipiko in successive deliveries the game was all but up for the Pacific Islanders, with the run rate now up to nine. They battled away and it was not until the final ball of the 50th over that last man Blake fell to the Nussbaumer combination and Guernsey could celebrate.



Jamie Nussbaumer pouches the catch

Guernseysportsphotography

Review

'Wright hails "proper team" with potential to develop' by Rob Batiste

ASH WRIGHT, Guernsey's new head of cricket, could finally smile. A tough week's cricket had come to an end, Vanuatu had finally been seen off and Guernsey's position in World League Five had been retained. 'If you ever want to know what ICC cricket is all about, then that was it,' he said in the immediate aftermath of a 19-run win over Guernsey's fellow Greens, a side full of esprit de corps in a sporting world of cynicism and gamesmanship, that you felt almost honoured to have seen them play. 'That's a proper team,' he added, and he was right. Guernsey are a team, too, but far from the finished article in an early 21st century when its best players are so starved of regular quality cricket, they have to take themselves off to the Sussex Leagues to get tested. Their predecessors in the wholly red-ball era would have loved events such as the ICC World League tournaments, be they 50- or 20-over affairs.

But while the old greats of our game may have lost out in terms of international excitement, they played and benefited from a time when virtually every week of the summer our island welcomed strong club sides that contained a vast array of different bowling styles, tough and/or free-flowing batsmen and experienced so many different game situations, that they were forever learning. And that's the task facing Guernsey's team of 2016, learning fast and, at times, the hard way. Finishing third in Jersey was a commendable effort and our best ever finish at this level.

Sure, Nigeria and Tanzania are on the slide and did not amount to much, but GH aside, Guernsey are an incredibly young side who apart from a fairly ordinary showing against Jersey, refused to get the occasion and pressures get the better of them. They will get better, whether sufficiently so to establish themselves at World League Four level where Jersey and Oman now go is unclear, but they are back on an upward curve and Wright has something to mould and make better.

Wright has one other big plus on his side – his captain. Jamie Nussbaumer will never be Mike Brearley, he may never reach the tactical heights of a Ricky Mills, the best Guernsey captain we ever had, but, as a leader, it is hard to imagine us improving on the 28-year-old all-rounder. Wright clearly rates him. 'He's an excellent captain on and off the field and what is good is that he has the potential to improve.'

Guernsey got the job done and anyone who thinks that they under-performed by simply not beating Jersey, needs their head testing. Jersey, despite that surprise loss at Port Soif late last summer, are ahead of the game. They have the added experience and where they are some way ahead of us, is in terms of fielding. On the pitch Guernsey made mistakes in Jersey, but given their inexperience that was to be expected. However, at the same time the management will have learned a lot about the team and who should be persevered with. It was fairly faultless guidance too, although I still fail to get my head around the decision to leave out the captain for the toughest game of all- Oman. Even if Jamie Nussbaumer was only 70% fit – his assessment not mine – and the likelihood of stealing a top two place ahead of Jersey and the Omanis has faltered with the defeat by the Caesareans – it sent out the wrong signals. It was a defeatist move and he should have played, even if it was directing operations, batting at nine and not bowling. But, all in all, a good week with many more pluses than negatives.