

2006/07 Grand Final Match Report – C1 Grade

Vermont South v Blackburn North

Following an inspiring victory over East Burwood Bennetswood in the Semi Final the Darren Milne Allstars (aka 'The World XI') were on a high. Going into the Grand Final the team comprising wily veterans and (barely) a splash of youth was confident.

Day 1

Milney brushed aside the disappointment of losing the toss - Blackburn North captain Allan Galpin had chosen to bat on a day that was suited to good cricket.

Blackburn North possessed one quality batsman, Ben Davis, who had scored an unbeaten century against the Vultures in the final round of the home and away season. In fact, he'd done that to just about everybody since round 6 so knocking him over early would be a significant step toward victory.

Andrew 'Norm' Bennett and Malcolm Berg began where they had left off in the Semi with some tight bowling in their opening spells. But despite their good work Davis looked polished and set for a big day, working them easily through the leg side without a false stroke. Norm then decided to change things and sent down a couple wide of the off stump. The result was an edge to first slip where, after a brief moment of doubt he took a difficult juggled catch and Davis was gone for 10. There was a lot of love in the air with the score at 1 for 11 in the 7th over.

Blackburn North's next batsman arrived at the crease and soon became another victim of the Darren Milne show. McLeod edged one through the slips cordon and (as the only one in the group who could run) Milney set off after it. McLeod then made the silly mistake of challenging Milney's arm. A direct hit had the score at 2 for 17 and things were looking good for the Mighty Vultures.

At this point the Blackburn North side decided to shut up shop. Over after over went by without an aggressive stroke being played and if not for the Steve 'Tubs' Tailby comedy gala playing at cover several of the fielding side would have fallen asleep. Eventually a shot was played and Berger had a well-earned victim. Milney was still creating drama and had taken another juggled catch at first slip. Berger's return from a high quality opening spell of 12 overs was 1/18.

At 3 for 18 in the 20th over a rout was on the cards but Galpin had other ideas. He began aggressively and, unlike his team mates, was brutal on loose bowling. He formed a good partnership with Gay and took the score along to 65. But Mark Weibgen (Wobs) had replaced Berger at the pavillon end and was spinning up a storm. The pressure was immense and eventually Gay succumbed and Wobs had him L.B.W for 16.

Norm was relieved after his opening spell by Sam Russell and the young gun did not disappoint. He rose to the challenge of a Grand Final and added a couple of yards of pace to his impeccable accuracy. With Faz up at the stumps the blowtorch was again applied to the batsmen and another succumbed. A frustrated Hunter drove a catch to Wobs at cover in Sam's 8th over with the score on 88.

Now you'd expect he'd need a rest between overs but Sammy had different ideas. In combination with Mark Farrell (Faz) he conjured up some brilliance at point to bring about a run out. Angerame was out for 2 and the score was now 6 for 100 in the 46th over.

Time was ticking by and Blackburn North needed some fast runs in order to produce a competitive total. As a result, Galpin holed out to long on from the bowling of Wobs for a well compiled 62. As he had done in the semi final Dave Young was again the man for the moment and took the catch to dismiss the Vulture's main threat.

For the 47th over Sam was relieved at the bowling crease by his old man. With dodgy hamstrings and sticky tape holding his back together Scotty rolled back the years to produce a high quality spell. He bowled with the alarming pace he'd delivered all season and the control the team had been waiting for, beating the bat numerous times. Eventually Scotty had Currie clean bowled for 1 with the score on 114. Russell Snr's spell lasted 8 overs and yielded figures of 1 for 22.

With Blackburn North now 8 down, Davis Snr and Growney started a (brief) rearguard action. They took the score to 146 before Davis skied a ball off Norm and was caught by the sure hands of Berger at point.

Norm followed up with the final wicket when Growney holed out to Tubs at deep mid-wicket with the score on 154. Norm had been the star of the semi final with his hat-trick at a crucial time. Again he'd produced the goods in Grand Final with 3 for 27 from 15 miserly overs.

With Norm hogging the spotlight again Wobs remained quite inconspicuous while bowling at the other end. With steeping bounce, a perfect length and considerable turn, Wobs tied the Blackburn North team in knots for about two and a half hours, producing outstanding figures of 2 for 45 from 20 straight overs.

Grant Weatherill and John Baxter were not required to hold any catches, but their support in the field was super and their great ground fielding provided constant support for the bowlers. It was this pressure that brought about the wickets throughout the day.

The 'World XI' headed home after play content in the knowledge that half the job had been done. Each bowler had risen to the challenge and every member of the team had contributed in the field in a quality team performance.

Day 2

Rain late in the following week meant for a soggy start to day 2 but the Terrara ground was in relatively good condition and play began on time.

In chasing a small total it was important for Faz and Milney to make a positive start and not allow Blackburn North to gain any momentum. Considering the excellent seasons they'd both had a good start was expected but Blackburn North would not have expected the onslaught that was to come.

Milney knows no other way and so set about destroying their attack in an awesome display. When they strayed onto his legs he hit them over mid-wicket and when they pitched up he belted them over mid off. Milney was eventually dismissed for 65 in the 23rd over when the score was 106 and the Blackburn North spirit had been broken.

Meanwhile, Faz had been in a privileged position watching the fireworks from close-range. He'd been playing the support role - working singles and occasionally dispatching poor deliveries when they came along. When he was joined by Steven Tailby the pair settled in and consolidated the strong position through to the tea break.

During the break a couple of Blackburn North players made a request that the Vultures finish them off quickly and after a couple of 'settling in' overs Faz and Tubs kindly obliged. The bowling regularly strayed onto their legs and was just as regularly dispatched to the boundary. With a well controlled slog to mid wicket in the 40th over Tubs brought up the winning runs. Faz had contributed a classy 62 not out and Tubs a high quality, unbeaten 25.

Given that the batting power of John Baxter, Grant Weatherill and Dave Young, all of whom had excellent seasons with the bat, plus a very strong tail was still to come this had been a comprehensive victory – a fair reflection of the team's performance throughout the season. A highlight of the season was that Scott Russell got to play in a victorious grand final with his son Sam.

An undefeated season had been topped off with the ultimate team display in the Grand Final.

Well done boys.