

## Zurich Crickets reach final at Basel Under 13/15 Tournament

In Basel's U13/ U15 tournament held over the weekend of 14-15 February 2015, an inexperienced Zurich Crickets team (topped up by Basel Dragons) came very close to beating a full-fat Luxembourg side in a terrific Final performance, only to let our perennial bugbear of wides undo an excellent batting performance.

### Final: Zurich Crickets (& 2 Basel Dragons) v Luxembourg

Having lost the toss and been put in, we opened with Rahul and injured Chris, for whom Oli acted as runner, and took the sensible approach. Rahul blunted the excellent opening bowlers, making 11 of the first 12 balls dots. Then, looking to move the score along, did not quite make his ground. 7 for 1 in the 3rd over. Gulp.

But Charlie, our left-hander, joined Chris at the crease and the scoring started to simply flow. Chris retired on 25 in the 5th over. Charlie retired on 25. Oli retired on 27. Runs came in lumps, almost all wall hits converted into 3s: the end-of-over score jumped by 12, 11, 8, 10, 8, 13, 9, 8, 8, 12, 20 (!) and 5, taking the total to a very strong **132-2** in 15 overs, of which 114 were off the bat - a huge score. Surya was 22 not out, Ishan scored 14 including a terrific 6. We had been given just 14 in wides and no-balls.

After a very shaky start - 11 runs incl. 8 extras from over 1, we tightened things up and began taking wickets. 18-1 at the end of over 3, 26-1. 31-2, 35-3 after 6: at this point Luxembourg were way off the run rate and had lost 3 wickets - one of which was Thomas, a key man, caught for 0 at long on by Oli. Keep it up Zurich! 43-3, 54-3: still on track. But then 69-3, 81-3, 91-3, 108-3, 119-3... We'd turned the game around and the pressure was all on us. Luxembourg finished the job in style with 2 straight sixes, reaching the target of 133, for 4 wickets, with 6 balls spare. Luxembourg scored 77 off the bat (68% of our score); we gave Luxembourg 56 runs in extras and the tournament win.

### How did we get there?

This tournament had 2 groups of 3 teams, then a knockout stage.

In our first game (9:00 on Saturday morning), we took on **Basel Nightfurries**. Basel had taken the commendable position of splitting its squad into 2 even sides. This presents a challenge to the more senior players, to lead by example. We won the toss but in the absence of 2 of our players, we had to bat: something we generally do not like. This time it was not a problem, as we compiled **124 runs**, many from extras. We were able to restrict our generosity and Basel Nightfurries could not reach the target. **Solid win.**

Our second game was against **Luxembourg**. The older hands amongst us know this team well, and usually when it has visited Switzerland it wins. Their bowling and batting are both usually very strong. We were put in to bat, and compiled **88 runs** (making the 132 scored in the final all the more commendable). Ishan (borrowed from Basel) led from the top, scoring 18, with good support from Oli (9) and Chris (12), both for several overs. Luxembourg gave us an unexpected 38 extras, but we had lost 3 wickets very quickly and cheaply, which was destabilising. We bowled with discipline and kept the scoring down to the run rate right to the 11th over, but then the low score showed, with Thomas (retiring on 30) leading the

way. Though we conceded only 22 extras (18 wides/ no-balls), our score was just too low. **Defeat with pride.**

Luxembourg was too strong for Basel Nightfuries, so we were into the Semi Final against a young Cossonay side. This time we won the toss and were able to bowl first - but we had not woken up! A very scrappy start let Cossonay off to a flyer, forcing us to battle to restrict the score. This we managed to do, keeping Cossonay to **93 runs**, a slightly below par score for this tournament. But Cossonay were fired up! They came out and bowled and fielded out of their skins, restricting the scoring tightly and supporting each other with a noise that we'd not yet seen. We chipped away and chipped away, with Chris and Oli both retiring on their way to victory with an over to spare. As was later to be seen in the final, maintaining the pressure on batsmen especially is very difficult. **Shaky win.**

And that took us to the final. There was one dark cloud: coming back in from retirement, in securing the winning run, Chris's bat hit the foot of the Cossonay wicket keeper as he was sliding it in, and stopped dead: Chris's leg - moving at top speed - ran straight into the top of the handle, causing a very nasty bruise just above the knee. This would cost us later: we were a bowler down.

A long wait let us visit Basel (lovely city), play hide and seek (!), and the players invent a new form of cricket of their own (!!), then have a good throw-down session, including a specific focus on the pull shot. This worked very well.

#### **Lessons learned:**

- you can't turn up 40 mins late and expect a tournament of 6 teams to be put on hold for you. An 8:30 start is an 8:30 start.
- the pull shot is our friend against spinners.
- cricketers in Switzerland come out of the blue: Rahul brought along his friend Tanav, who bowled tidily, took catches, batted with purpose and was clearly part of the team - a new member! (Thanks, Tanav).
- we can be a fantastic batting unit.
- we can be a strong bowling unit (game 1 v Luxembourg).
- but we have to bowl better, consistently. If we had combined our bowling from the first game with our batting from the second game against Luxembourg, we'd surely be the champions.
- We have found our top order. Rahul, Chris, Charlie, Oli, Surya worked excellently.
- Winning (last week) feels much better than letting it slip away!

Basel showed again that they put on an excellent tournament - thanks very much to Chris and team. Thanks also to Ishan and Tom Harper who played for us throughout/ on Sunday.