
THE RETURN OF THE KING Irfan Yousaf in COMMAND

Pakistan vs CCCC Melba Cricket Ground 05 February 2006



This almost novelty encounter was never going to turn the tide of the 2005/06 cricket season in Canberra, but it was a splendid cricket match. The innings of both teams had a pattern of top-order collapse followed by recovery. CCCC collapsed early only to give CCCC captain, Shiva a chance to shine with the bat and score a competitive score at the Melba Cricket Ground. Pakistan captain Irfan Yousaf had other things in mind coming back in form with a wonderful batting display.

Pakistan eventually came out victorious with 4 wickets on a day of ups and downs. This was the best chance for CCCC to win, especially with the early fall of wickets of Pakistan's innings. But Irfan Yousaf played yet another comeback innings for Pakistan. Irfan Yousaf did strike some sweetest shots of the day when two straight drives off Raju carried for two consecutive sixes. This was a very important innings and result for Pakistan and Irfan Yousaf was well pleased to be back in form and lead the side from the front.

Those who witnessed said that this was one of the thrilling encounters this season with captain Irfan Yousaf taking the honours with a blistering innings of 78 runs (8 fours and 4 sixes) and getting back in form making the perfect opportunity for 'The Return of the King'.

CCCC captain Shiva won the toss and elected to bat on a bright sunny day at Melba Cricket Ground. It was always going to be a tough battle between the two sides with the amount of emotions left between the players in the previous match at Kaleen's Diamantina Oval where a patient innings from Syed Jaffry (33 runs NO) and a rapid innings from Atif (39 runs) came at the right time to win the game for Pakistan. The tensions were high and CCCC were back with their full strength team and Shiva returning back from a one-match rest. CCCC scored a competitive score of 211 runs in the 35 over match. Shiva scored a well-deserved half-century and putting Pakistan under pressure in a high scoring match. Pakistan's poor fielding also contributed to CCCC cause. Earlier in the day, Afzaal Anjum was too fast and furious with his bowling giving no chance to Ashwin and Giyani to free their arms. Afzaal now a seasoned campaigner has always been Pakistan's number one strike bowler. With Khurram Butt delivering on the other end and claiming the wicket of Giyani caught by extra cautious Waqas at third man boundary, before being dropped twice.



Requiring a score of 212 runs in 35 overs was never easy, considering the strong bowling attack of CCCC. Pakistan started with some positive batting display scoring 55 runs from 9 overs. Atif's wicket (bowled by Ashwin) made way for Syed Jaffry to carry on the innings but at the total score of 64, Khurram Butt was caught off the bowling of Shezi. Pakistan run rate was just a bit behind the required rate but with the experience of Jaffry and players like Nadir, Irfan, Afzaal and Khurram Jr still to come there was no sign of panic in the

Pakistan dressing room. Nadir hit a quick 23 runs when he was also caught of the bowling of Giyani, trying to pull for a four over midwicket. With the fall of Nadir's wicket Pakistan captain Irfan Yousaf joined Syed Jaffry at the team score at 102. Still requiring another 110 runs from 14 overs with plenty of wickets in hand the pressure was building on the CCCC team. CCCC captain Shiva came into the attack and got the prize wicket of Syed Jaffry (16 runs) when he mistimed a pull shot and found the fielder at short square leg.

At the score of 122 runs in 20 overs, Pakistan need exactly 100 runs from the last 15 overs to win the match. Suddenly Pakistan found themselves in even more trouble when Giyani bowled Shahzad. At 5/138 in the 23rd over, Pakistan team had still faith in their players with the captain still at the crease and Khurram Jr joining him, and pinch hitter Afzaal still to come.

Pakistan captain, Irfan Yousaf, made a quick half-century and made the intentions clear to the opposition that he will not let his team down. With some big hitting from Irfan Yousaf and Khurram Jr being calm against his normal style, Pakistan won the match with 5 overs to spare.



Pakistan Scorecard

Khurram Butt	Caught bowled Shezl40
Atif Rafiq	Bowled Ashwin09
Syed Jaffry	Caught bowled Shiva16
Nadir Khan	Caught bowled Giyani23
Irfan Yousaf *	Caught bowled Raju78
Shahzad	Bowled Giyani00
Khurram Jr	NOT OUT18
Afzaal Anjum	NOT OUT00
Tahir	DNB	
Waqas	DNB	
Shahid Zia	DNB	
Extras	29
TOTAL		213