



**The only XL win in Spain**

## **An enjoyable tour to the Costa Blanca**

*By Ken Medlock*

After last year's enjoyable visit to Alicante a second visit was a certainty and on October 31 a party of 33 left Gatwick Airport for a 10-day tour.

It was a happy relief to leave behind UK's rain and floods and on arrival we received a warm welcome from Clive Woodbridge, Director of Cricket with the news that the weather forecast was for a fine sunny week ahead.

The prediction was correct as we had continuous sunshine and our four matches on the Columbus Oval, two against Sporting Alfaz and two against XL Spain were played in ideal cricket weather.

Our first match against the XL of Spain was on a 'time' basis. We batted first and runs were hard to come by due, in part, to the damp, very grassy outfield and it wasn't until the seventh over that runs scored exceeded overs bowled.

The innings ended on 110 and contained only three boundaries. Robbie Barker, who opened the innings, was the last wicket to fall with a score of 47 and the only other double figure contribution was Martin Abbott's 23. Ray Jones's bowling analysis read 15-7-16-4.

The hot sun dried out the outfield and the home side had no difficulty in knocking off the runs in 23.1 overs, thanks to a quick 44 not out by Paul Stansfield.

The second match was against Sporting Alfaz who could only muster 63 runs due to the accurate bowling of Simon Klimcke and Alex De Geer, a Dutch SGS member who was on holiday. Their figures were 4-39 and 3-14 respectively. Clive Huggins with 25, supported by Alan Luff, knocked off the required runs, giving the XL Club their first victory on Spanish soil.

The next day we again played Sporting Alfas in a forty-five over match and we scored 205-6 thanks to a first class stand between Barry Smith and skipper Ron Hart and a quick 31 not out by Alan Luff helped to produce a respectable score. The total would have been higher had it not been for sixth change bowler Alex De Geer taking 4-35.

Regrettably our bowling attack was not sufficiently accurate and the home side reached the required winning total in 31.2 overs with David Climent and De Geer scoring 84 and 77 respectively.

The XL of Spain declared at 185-7 and an XL Club record was set when skipper Ron Hart opened the bowling with Alex Houlgate, aged 80, and Mike Wicks, 64. Although Alex didn't take any wickets he bowled quite steadily whilst Mike had two successes.

Robbie Barker's wicket fell in the second over and at 94-3 we were still there with a chance but it was not to be, the last seven wickets produced only seventeen runs, the innings closing at 111. Ron Helyar's 31 was the highest score and Ray Jones's 6-37 was one of the best bowling performances of the tour.

We won one and lost three, all played in the usual XL Club's friendly, competitive spirit which served to enrich our relationship with the cricketing fraternity in this part of Spain.

Our farewell Dinner and Dance was held in the same restaurant as last year, in the company of our cricketing friends where we were able to express our thanks to Clive Woodbridge and the Club for the arrangements they had made to ensure we had a memorable visit. And finally, thanks are due to Gordon Potter who organised the tour but was unable to join the party and to Ron Hart who acted as tour manager and team captain.



Ron Hart calls correctly against Forty Club of Spain



First in, last out. Robbie Barker, 47, in the first match



XL v Forty Club of Spain