

A winning tour in Malta - 2005

The Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs and French, among others, occupied the island of Malta before the British became established around 1800 but it was a more friendly invasion of 32 members of the Forty Club and their partners that took place in October 2004. Those who don't appreciate Malta as a cricket playing nation should be aware that it is home to the world's oldest international player, Wally Glynn, who at 65 years 269 days achieved the honour on 21st August 1997 when Malta played Greece in the ECF Championship.

In the first game against the local Marsa CC Saturday XI the Forty Club made 185-8 in 45 overs with Peter Crees top scoring with 52. This proved inadequate as the youthful locals passed the total with nearly 17 overs remaining. Leading the chase was Frank Spiteri, vice captain of the Malta national side, who hit 106 out of 153 in just 24 overs including 5 sixes and 9 fours before retiring.

The next day against the Marsa Sunday side the roles were reversed in a 40 over game as the home club made 204-7 with Andy Shanks returning 3-42 and Duncan Innes 2-42. XL openers Steven Coltman (53) and Mike Plumridge (33) began aggressively with 99 in just 15 Overs before both were dismissed in successive overs. The run rate then diminished but later acceleration from Andy Meads (43) and Barry Peay (38*) saw XL home by 6 wickets with 8 balls to spare.

Tuesday saw XL playing Worcestershire Over 50s who were also touring and a close, exciting contest ensued. XL batsmen were unusually out of sorts as the Worcester bowlers kept an excellent line and length after a heavy rainstorm had delayed the start. Their total of 132-9 in 45 overs owed everything to skipper Ron Hart's 44. To defend such a low target required top class bowling and fielding and Hugh Milner (2-21), Andrew Barton (3-16) and Graham Corke (3-28) led the way with Martin Abbott's leg-side stumping off a wide being adjudged the fielding highlight as Worcester were dismissed for 118 in 39 overs.

Wednesday's game against the Marsa Midweek side saw another victory as XL openers Andy Meads (48) and Steven Coltman (25) put on 64 in the first 12 overs. The final total of 221-8 in 45 overs was boosted by 30 extras and Graham Corke's quick fire 38. XL bowling and fielding were again of high standard as the home side struggled and were dismissed for 172 in 41.2 overs with Mike Wicks taking 3-40, Andy Shanks 3-29 and Adrian Drake 2-40.

Friday saw Worcester Over 50s again the opposition but the match proved disappointingly one-sided as XL posted 284-6 in their 45 overs, leading scorers being Mike Plumridge (78), Jaap Vogelaar (57*) and Robbie Barker (48). Worcester only recovered from an early slump to 30-5 with a 97 run partnership for the 6th wicket but once this was broken Andy Shanks routed the tail to finish with 5-23 as the last 5 wickets fell for just 10 runs.

The last game against the strong Marsa Saturday side saw XL again defeated soundly as had happened the previous week. Openers Andy Meads (60) and Barry Peay (74) put on 149 in 37 overs but after their dismissals there was no acceleration and the innings closed at 232-8 after 45 overs. This total proved no problem for the home side as Nowell Khosla (105*) and Angelo Spiteri (68) took advantage of some ill-directed bowling from the tired XL seamers. The victory was obtained in 35.4 overs as tour fatigue became more apparent.

Tour supreme Ron Hart was pleased overall with what he described as XL Club's most successful overseas trip with a four win sequence sandwiched by two defeats. He praised the players, all of whom made a contribution to the success and also commended the efforts of umpires David Spyer and Ian Davis as well as scorers Jill Bracken and Janice Spyer. The luxury of staying in the island's premier hotel so close to the capital Valletta afforded ideal opportunities to visit local restaurants and make sightseeing excursions and take full advantage of the excellent hospitality of The Marsa Sports Club.

Martin Abbott



Winning smiles as XL skipper Duncan Innes leads the team in, followed by Robbie Barker. Steve Coltman and Andy Meadsq