

TOUR REPORT

Aaand They're Back!

The first ever Peruvian Women's Cricket Team, The Vicuñas, arrived in Lima yesterday bloody but unbowed, technically defeated but triumphant in spirit. Confident that they have made an indelible mark on regional cricket.

Having practiced hard for 4 months they faced off against three regional teams (Argentina, Brazil and Chile) whose experience ranges from 6 to 2 years. In the first match against reigning champions Argentina, they fielded first and got off to a shaky start until 11 year old Jade "Chaverinha" (Keychain) Rodriguez found her form and dismissed the fearsome Argentinian opener LBW. The team took heart and a second wicket fell to Donella Shermuly.

Though no match for the Argentinian master blasters – who scored a massive 240 runs – the Vicuñas gave a spirited batting performance with 4s being scored by Frances "Captain Fantastic" Carr and Helena Houghton.

Now fully fledged international cricketers, the Vicuñas took the field the next day for their match against Chile, proudly grubby. Their formerly white uniforms now a rich red from diving about on the field. Opting to bowl first, the Vicuñas again unleashed Keychain Rodriguez, who captured three wickets: an outright middle stump, a catch (taken by Veronica "Safe Hands" Suoheimo) and the third by managing to scare the Chilean top scorer into knocking her own wicket over! A run-out engineered by Rodriguez and Carr brought the wicket total to 4.

Despite this sterling performance in both bowling and fielding the Chileans managed a daunting 130. Batting was opened by Emily Stainton and Juliet "Curly Pain" Solomon who managed to stay in for more than half the innings, making a cautious and conservative partnership of 28. They were then instructed by Coach Nick "Ohmygod I need Hair Gel" Barsby to either hit out or get out and so obliged. Solomon managed to top score for Peru with a modest but exhilarating 16. With overs fast disappearing, the Vicuñas threw caution to the wind and ran quickly through their batting order with valiant attempts to score runs. The final total was 68 with Rodriguez batting at number 11 and making a personal average-enhancing 2 not out.

Peru took to the field on the final day of the tournament knowing that they were up against possibly the strongest, but most friendly, side. Forever supportive and desperate for Peru to grow in the international game, the two captains, along with the gods of Brazilian cricket, came to an agreement to make the match not so much a

fiercely competitive encounter, but a game where everyone could get the chance to shine and show their own personal class, giving all 14 Peruvian players a chance to play and take huge experience from the game.

Batting first, the order was turned upside down and all around. Opening with Wendy Shermuly and Cally Nixon the Vicuñas got off to a teary (on behalf of W. Shermuly) and a slightly bizarre start as Shermuly was run out without facing a ball, but ever understanding and sportsmanlike, she magnanimously returned to the dugout appreciative of being given the chance to bat first up. Nixon hit her first international runs with a delightful and timely clip off her legs, only to be out a couple of overs later. Following came the middle order with brave and technically sound performances from Ana de Pinho, Veronica Suoheimo, Francesca Frias (who hit a positively exquisitely lofted cover drive for two runs and played some determined defensive strokes), Emily Stainton (who continued to improve on her previous stylistic innings) and Donella Shermuly, who flicked a nice 2 runs off her hip to get the middle order moving again. The Vicuñas' Captain Fantastic was unluckily caught out after trying to beat a full toss over the trees towards Rio de Janeiro. Helena Houghton continued to time the ball deliciously, while Jade Rodriguez and Giovana Barco played some nice shots.

At number 7 came Michelle Gillespie, who had arrived in Brasilia after travelling to just about every world capital including Antarctica to get there. She clearly took her opportunity and, after almost killing her coach and losing a ball over some trees in practice with her newly discovered ability to straight drive, smashed one of the Brazilian bowlers for 4 runs before playing some sumptuous straight drives, accumulating 13 or so runs in the process. A big shout out must go to her for her stubborn determination to get there after a start that might have crippled the drive of others. In came Juliet Solomon at 9 and drove, with consummate ease, the Brazilian opening bowler through the cover point area. She was then unfortunately run out after a misunderstanding after a fumble by the wicket keeper, but upon leaving the crease the words "we wanted to see you bat more" were uttered by the Brazilians with genuine honesty.

Marcia Bushell was the only member of the team not to get to bat, but she was being saved so she could use her incredible throwing arm and strike fear into the hearts of the Brazilian batswomen.

The bowling, like the batting line up, was chopped and changed, and after a pre-fielding pep talk that included multiple incorrect clichés badly spoken by the coach ("*missing the boat of opportunity*"), the team took to the field. Everyone, except the chronically reluctant, bowled. The Brazilians, as part of the agreement, retired their

batswomen after a certain amount of overs, giving their players a chance too, a nice sportsmanlike touch to a fantastic tournament.

Notable bowling performances were given by Veronica who got a wicket Caught and Bowled, again enhancing her status as the safest pair of hands in the team. Jade again bowled brilliantly but alas no wickets. Giovana bowled out one of the batswoman to claim her first wicket for Peru while Donella and Helena, having sacrificed their kneecaps to containing the Brazilian batting, were escorted off the pitch in elegant and warrior-like fashion. Francesca Frias bowled tightly and showed that in the future she will be a fierce and accurate bowler. Although Brazil knocked off the runs after only a few overs, the game was of huge use for both sides.

It must be mentioned and applauded that had Brazil gone into the game with the same mentality as the previous games, their batters or bowlers would have probably won overall awards, but it is a credit to their desire to see Peru grow in cricket that they didn't even deploy their top batters, again displaying their sportsmanship to one and all.

At the end of the tournament, the Vicuñas retire as the most spirited team in the tournament, badly bruised (mainly by their coach's bowling) but thrilled and proud to have shown the region that Peru are ready to explode onto the cricket scene in the Americas.

In a glittering and impromptu closing ceremony, the following inter-team awards were presented:

Safest pair of hands – Veronica Suoheimo

Body on the Line – Giovana Barco

Sportsmanship – Emily Stainton

Speedy Gonzalez – Wendy Shermuly

One hell of an arm – Marcia Bushell

Most Improved – Michelle “Silent Fear” Gillespie

Dedication to the Cause – Cally Nixon

Most Damaging Bowler – Jade “Chaverinha” Rodriguez Solomon

Bravest Player – Donella Shermully

Best Technique – Helena Houghton

Best Defense – Ana de Pinho

Top Scorer and Best Shot – Juliet “Curly Pain” Solomon

Captain Fantastic – Frances Carr

Spirit of Cricket – Francesca Frias

The world must be warned: Peru Cricket is now on the radar.

Arriba Peru!!