The Grand Final: Panama v MCC

Winning the toss, Panama decided to bat first. After a watchful start, the hosts began to open their shoulders and some big hitting got them to 74 for 2 off the first 10 overs.

The introduction of spin temporarily stemmed the flow, and a flurry of wickets saw Panama reduced to 86 for 6. Watling (3 for 30) did most of the mid-innings damage with his dipping leg spinners.

MCC sniffed a chance to go for the jugular, but the hosts bat from 1-11, and they just kept coming. With the semi-final earlier in the morning, the MCC players visibly wilted in the last five overs and Panama, with some extremely clean hitting of the ball and clever running, amassed a challenging 163 runs.

In a bold move that highlighted MCC's intentions on-field skipper, Luke Blackaby promoted Ahmed up the order as a stylish pinch hitter. After a couple of crunching fours, Ahmed skied one and was duly caught, the first of several excellent catches by the hosts.

Akhtar (16) and first Donald (35), then skipper Blackaby (51 not out), steadied the ship. At 78 for 2 off the first 10 overs, MCC were on course for a famous win. Needing 86 runs to win, off the final 10 overs game, was very much on. Blackaby played an amazing innings full of poise and big-hitting to get the Club close, but ultimately MCC were to fall short of their final hurdle, by 16 runs, with the run out of the final batsman Dave Atkin in the last over.

Massive credit must go to both teams for making the Final such a spectacle. Panama played an excellent game, particularly their ground fielding, which was outstanding.

After the final wicket, there was a massive pitch invasion, as the home fans celebrated as if their team had won a World Cup! MCC retreated to the relative safety of their guarded gazebo and took five minutes to gather their thoughts.

In the end, it was a cracking finish for the neutral, and the scenes at the end typified the 'Spirit of Cricket' message the MCC had been spreading throughout Panama.

by MCC Captain, Jon Rea-Palmer