

Group Game: Peru v MCC

Peru were on first against MCC in the opening fixture of the tournament. The game was due to be a 9am start, and given the gridlock nature of the traffic in Panama we left an hour for a 30-minute journey. We needed all 60 minutes of the hour! Having witnessed two crashes on the journey to the ground we turned up in plenty of time to see the wickets being prepared.

Straight away we realized that in Suriname we had been spoilt. The two pitches side by side were on the suburban, British-owned ex-US air base known as *Panama Pacifico*. Much like the rest of the estate, where the development is very much in its infancy, the pitches were both very different from the national stadium in Paramiribo. Gone was the grass wicket, in its place coconut mats stretched over rolled mud, and both outfielders were your proverbial minefields – a mixture of tufty grass and sandy bare areas, a fielders nightmare!

Still the ground/pitch was the same for both sides, and the backdrop vistas on all sides are simply spectacular. After a brief opening ceremony where the British Ambassador, Ian Pollard welcomed the teams and especially MCC, we got down to business.

Winning the toss MCC chose to bat first. Ahmed (28) and Blackaby (67) got off to a good start. But probably the defining partnership of the game was between Blackaby and Malith Madurasinghe (21) who both played stylish knocks to put the MCC in an excellent position at 116 for 2 off 10 overs. The MCC went on to score an impressive 200 for 8 off their 20 overs.

In response the Peru side never really got going. Despite the occasional big blow they were largely contained by a very controlled MCC attack and were eventually dismissed for 81. MCC recorded their first victory of the tour by a decisive 119 runs, and more importantly one win out of one for the tournament.

As was the case in Suriname, spin was very much the order of the day and both Smallwood (3 for 9) and Pollard (3 for 14) proved too good for the Peruvians and that they will be invaluable going deeper into the tournament.

by MCC Captain, Jon Rea-Palmer