

A Farewell Match Celebrating Cricket and Camaraderie in Qatar

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One of the best things in Qatar for people from subcontinent is the opportunity to continue playing cricket under Qatar Veteran cricket league, even after the prime cricketing days for us are over and the fitness levels have dropped. The camaraderie which exists amongst the members of Qatar Veteran Cricket (QVC) league is extraordinary and we all love spending time with each other in the cricketing field. Hats off to the Don of QVC league MI Farid to provide this forum for us, to enjoy playing the game we all love, over the weekends and also during the evening time in Ramadan

period.

I have fond memories of playing cricket under floodlights during Ramadan time from 1999 onwards and today being the first day of Ramadan , Farid and Krishna Kumar KK (the organizer for Super veteran league) had arranged for a farewell match for my dear friend and Nenben Jaishankar who is bidding adieu to Qatar next month and heading back to Chennai to be with his aged parents. Jai had played in Qatar veteran league for over the last 12 years – he represented my Lovely Littles team in B division of Veteran league and also played in Super veteran league, apart from his stint in CA chapter cricket . It was a wonderful gesture from so many veteran cricketers to come and play today for his farewell match.

It was a lovely match held in gorgeous weather conditions, with a wonderful spirit amongst the players. Jai and Naidu were chosen to be the skippers for the teams – On paper Jai's team looked stronger, but Naidu had some surprise package up his sleeve who performed well, and his team had better discipline in both bowling and fielding than Jai's XII which resulted in the match going Naidu's way. But the Falcon shield went to the losing captain Jai as he was the hero of the evening .

Jai won the toss and had no hesitation in electing to bat as he is a strong believer in putting the runs on the board first and choking the opposition under pressure when they chase the score . But unfortunately the team didn't have the fire power to fuel the innings from the beginning. The

innings moved in snail's pace for most part, with no real big hits, till our star player Arun came in the end to score 38 runs with 4 fours and 1 six. The senior veteran Saiyed Jamal showed glimpses of his vintage batting prowess with 2 gorgeous off drives, yours truly Gopal played 12 balls to score 10 runs and remained not out, and Captain Jai got out in 6th ball after scoring 10 runs including a beautiful square drive for 4. Ravi Shankar also played a brilliant cover drive for 4 off the first ball he faced, but got out in 3rd ball, with Rajesh taking a blinder at short mid wicket. Rajesh took 2 good catches today and his son who had come to watch was mightily happy with his papa's performance – but it was more of the ball catching Rajesh who was really surprised in seeing the ball in his hands on both the occasions.

The pick of the bowlers for Naidu's team were the veterans Sabir and Ramesh who took 2 wickets apiece. New comer to the veteran cricket Musheer was the surprise package and he bowled at brisk pace with good line and length and didn't allow the batsmen to free their arms. Fit looking Sheji also bowled couple of decent overs including one economical over which was 17th over of the innings when our batsman Venkkat decided, for reasons only known to him, to leave the balls outside the offstump and admire the balls thudding in to the keeper's gloves. We did lose vital scoring opportunities in the end when Arun didn't get enough strike and we managed to put only 137 runs on board which is a below par score in this ground.

Chasing this modest score Naidu's team lost the opener, the classy batsman Mahesh off the 3rd ball of the innings to a floater from the veteran Murthy and it was a great sportsman spirit from Mahesh to walk off immediately after he snicked the ball

. Murthi showed all his guile in his bowling today and bamboozled the batsmen. . The 2nd wicket pair of Sheji and Shami scored briskly with few boundaries as well and they scored at a rate more than what was required. Sheji scored 20 runs and Shami 17 runs and both went in to the Dug out after playing the initial 12 balls and remaining not out. Then the pair of Rajesh and Chandu continued the momentum with regular hits to the fence, till Chandu's powerful cover drive came straight to me and I enjoyed catching it and throwing the ball up in jubilation. We had our chance that time to bounce back in the match with 60 odd runs required off last 10 overs with overs from our good bowlers still to go. But unfortunately at this time, we left at least 5 boundaries behind the stumps in Fine leg and Third man when the fielders could not spot the ball, and infact they managed to go in opposite direction of the ball, and these fielding lapses let the pressure off the batsmen.

Even though Jamal came back to clean bowl Ramesh, Murthy accounted for the star player Sabir to a brilliant catch from Anish at mid wicket fence , and Arun bowled two pacy overs beating the batsmen consistently , it was just too late for us. The pair of KK and Deepak took full advantage of

the mediocre fielding to convert 1s to 2s and 2s to 3s, and Naidu's team ramped home by 17th over itself. KK was the top scorer with 22 not out.

Well played Naidu and his team. Infact the winner of today's game is all the 24 players who came in to express their love and affection to our dear friend Jai who played his last match with us today.

Hats off to all of us , and we handed over to Jai a falcon shield and also a nice bat autographed by all of us. Jai.

Sharing the pictures clicked of the evening and also few video clippings of pitch inspection, the toss from the captains, and a guard of honor when Jai returned back to the dug out after batting. An evening to remember for sure for Jai and also for all of us