



HILTON COLLEGE



view from the

Dugout

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The recent cricket test series against Sri Lanka has provided some excellent material for commentaries by sports psychologists and analysts alike. To be the first Asian team to win a test series in South Africa is no mean feat and especially considering that just weeks ago the very same team suffered a humbling 2 - 0 test series loss to Australia. There may be innumerable reasons for their "turn-around" in fortunes, such as the hard-line approach that came from the Sri Lankan Cricket Board, but for me it boiled down to two distinct factors.

Firstly, when the chips were down someone in their team put up their hand, took responsibility and delivered. Let's face it, for all intents and purposes, Sri Lanka were outplayed in the first test. Regardless of what the media say, they were second with the bat AS WELL as with the ball. With 9 wickets down and a mammoth 78 runs in arrears, nobody really gave them a chance to win the game against our bowling attack. Step up Kusal Perera, with an historic 153* run innings, and brave Vishwa Fernando, who found the right side of the bat to support him, and all of a sudden victory was clutched from the jaws of defeat. Two men who decided that they would take responsibility when the team needed them the most. In the words of Perera, "I was just doing my job". He didn't see the mountain they faced on that last day as anyone else's responsibility but his own - no blame was apportioned, just the clarity of mind to see it as an opportunity to do what he does best. Very often we see the opposite in teams, especially in teams that are expected to win. Players stand back just expecting the magic to happen instead of making it happen themselves - the recent All Black loss against Ireland comes to mind. Ultimately, every team needs players who do the exact opposite - with a "pick me" attitude they look to make the decisive impact on the game.

Undoubtedly, the grit shown by these players can only have lifted their teammates coming into the second test. However, I believe that the second reason that the Sri Lankans "came good" was because of their approach to

the series, as dictated by their interim captain Dimath Karunaratne. In his post-match interview Dimath said the following about his expectations of his players "When I started (as captain) I said to my boys, 'Whatever happens you have to keep on smiling, keep enjoying (yourself). If you're not enjoying (yourself) you don't get to a hundred percent". He further encouraged his players going into the final test to 'play your normal game, if you can hit over the fielder go for it.' One would think that, with history beckoning, they would have taken things a little more seriously! Cleverly, by taking the pressure off their players they did the exact opposite to the Proteas - their freedom and confidence whilst batting put pressure on us and ultimately this won them the game.

I don't think that a gritty "give the ball to me" attitude and enjoyment are mutually exclusive. If a culture of pressure and fear is created by unrealistic expectations of parents and coaches we will hardly find a player at school level willing to put up his hand when his team needs him. If we want this type of resolve in our boys, perhaps we should take a leaf out of the Sri Lankan play book and teach our boys to keep on smiling and 'go for it'.

ATHLETICS

Thomas Dyer and RD Engelbrecht took part at the KZN Trials this past weekend. Both boys performed exceptionally, achieving top positions at the meeting. Thomas won gold in the U15 shot put whilst RD won a gold medal in the U15 long jump, a silver medal in the U15 100m hurdles and a silver medal in the U15 300m hurdles (particularly impressive considering he is only U14).

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BASKETBALL

The term 1 basketball season drew to a close with a down-the-line fixture against Michaelhouse on Saturday 16 February and the 1st team St Johns Tournament this past weekend.

We are thrilled with their club performance against our arch rival after completing no less than 10 victories and only losing 4 matches in the encounter – our best ever results against them. Michaelhouse, however, still remain top contenders in this sport with their first team being one of the better teams in the country at the moment. It was therefore no surprise when they won the main game fairly easily. Our U14A and U16A also went “down” narrowly, but it was our U15A and 2nds who were the surprise packages on the day turning around negative results from last year to win 27 - 13 and 32 - 26 respectively. Other massive results came from “team of the day” 3rds (46 - 27), U15B (38 - 21) and the U14B (35 - 16).

The 1st team travelled to Johannesburg to take part in the St. Johns tournament, an event that attracts teams from all over the continent. On Friday, our boys got off to the best possible start with an exceptional win against top seeds Maritzburg College (33 - 22). They followed this up with another good performance against Brookhouse (42 - 34) to be sitting pretty after day 1. On Saturday a lacklustre first performance saw us go down to Dominican Convent School (14 - 29) and then later we sustained another heart breaking loss to St. Benedicts (38 - 43), in a match that could have gone either way. Fortunately, we kept our qualification hopes alive that afternoon with an excellent win against St. Johns (24 - 17). Needing one more win on Sunday to go through to the playoffs, we unfortunately came up short in our first match against Pretoria boys (15 - 28). The frequency and intensity of the matches started to take its toll and a few key injuries then contributed to our loss against Clifton in the final pool match. It was a case of so close yet so far for our young team. Undoubtedly, the experience that they will have gained from the tournament will be invaluable as we look to pose a serious threat next summer.



CRICKET

The first XI once again faced the challenge of a tough first 2 day draw versus St Stithian's. Having won the toss and choosing to bat on what looked like a good pitch, Hilton were soon in trouble at 30 for 6. The Saints bowlers extracting every little bit out of the wicket by hitting a really good line and length. Some good fight by Colby Dyer and Wezo Gqiba got us up to 67. After lunch Hilton set about the task of trying to do the same thing but didn't bowl quite as well and whatever moisture had been in the wicket, had dried up. A Pretoria thunderstorm brought an early end to the days play with Saints 21 for 2. Things didn't quite go to plan initially on day 2 as they crept their score up to 70 for 3 before Colby Dyer and Michael Frost bowled with some great control, Michael Frost ending with 4 for 11 off 10 overs and Saints deciding to declare at 102 for 7. Hilton made a much better start to their 2nd innings and Joshua Watt (41) Chris Meyer (33) Slade Van Staden (36) Chris Pistorius (31) put us in a position to declare at 170 for 7 leaving Saints 142 to win from 20 overs. The players shook hands with Saints 125 for 4 and no result possible but a hard fought draw.

After heavy rain the 50 over game versus St David's was reduced to a T20 match. Having won the toss and batted, Hilton made a steady start on what was a belter of a pitch. A strong cross wind made scoring one way difficult but the boys quickly worked it out as we went from 62 for 1 off 10 to 164 for 7 off 20. The highlight

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being Dylan Thompson's 28 not out off 9 balls at the back end. We then bowled with real purpose and St David's were never really in the game as they were bowled out for 107.



Back on the same field as the previous day against a Helpmekaar side that had easily beaten Bishops the day before, we knew we had to be at our best. It was almost a re-run of our game vs St David's as we batted exceptionally well making 181 from 20 overs with Nick Hatton top scoring (65) and Michael Booth (34). Early wickets from John Turner never allowed Helpmekaar to get going and they ended 85 for 9 from 20 giving Hilton a huge victory margin.

The U15 tour to St Benedict's was as much a success off the field as it was on the field, as the team had time to bond and become a unit that found its way.

Our first fixture versus St Benedict's got off to the perfect start as Kristofer Watt took a wicket off the first ball of the tour. The total of 156 was always going to be an interesting chase. One good partnership was needed and it was found between Jake Carstens and Kristofer Watt as they consolidated an iffy start to get the team into full control of the chase. Jake's 68 not out was the difference between the teams. The match versus St Johns was the poorest performance of the tour as, in a Declaration cricket match, the team found it difficult to find any meaningful partnerships. Luc Benkenstein's 77 was the stand out performance with the bat. Defending 158 in Johannesburg was always going to be a tough task,

although the leg spinners combined to bowl 22 overs 5 for 68, good batting by the St Johns team saw them reach the mark six wickets down with 17 overs left in the game. The team needed to bounce back and that they did against a red hot St Albans team who were on a roll after massive wins against St Andrews Grahamstown and Michaelhouse. Once again discipline and partnerships were discussed before the game. The continuous pressure put on the St Albans cricketers was eventually telling as the bowling unit dismissed the much vaunted St Albans batting line up for 153 on a smallish field. The partnerships that were asked for came from Jake Carstens and Matt Wilson and Jake Carstens and Kristofer Watt. A seven wicket win was a great bounce back after the disappointment of the previous day. The final day match, a T20 versus the dangerous Helpmekaar who had nothing to lose was always going to be a match we would need to manage. The bowling unit stepped up and from the start were on the ball. The control showed by all the seamers was a marvel to see as the big hitting Helpmekaar were never in a position to attack. From 76 for 5 to 83 all out was an indication of the pressure that the bowling and fielding unit were able to mount on the free scoring Helpmekaar batsmen. As clinical as we were with the ball, we were fortunate to do with the bat as on a moving wicket Jake Carstens and Kristofer Watt took their team over the line.

In a weekend where heavy rain on Friday night put paid to all the A team cricket with the exception of the U16A fixture.

The second team match was dominated by Hilton College. Partnerships between Nic Campbell, Cameron Pearce and later Nic and Steph Liebenberg put the match out of Michaelhouse's reach. A clinical bowling performance with the spinners sharing in 8 of the wickets to fall saw the second team win by 119 runs. The fourth team match ended in a last over thriller as the Hilton boys were one wicket away from victory.

In the U16A cricket match, Hilton's opening pair produced a 127 run opening partnership, their final score of 195 for 2 in 35 overs was always going to be enough. At 24 for 4 in response, the game was over as a contest, although the lower order did show some fight. Hilton ran out winners by 20 runs. The U16B team once

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again showed unbelievable fight after a poor batting display to end one wicket short of victory defending 77.

The U15 age group were the worst affected as the weather upset the final fixture of their season. The U14B team were fortunate to get onto the park. They were clinical with the ball as Tawanda Kugotsi ripped the heart out of the Michaelhouse batting order. Chasing 77, the team were never in trouble even though they lost a few wickets at the end of the innings to win by 2 wickets. The U14C match was the nail biter of the day as they ended 1 run short. Congratulations to the team for the grit they have showed.

(Thank you to Warren Kirsten for his contribution to this report)



SWIMMING

A depleted A swimming team competed at the Top Schools Gala on Wednesday last week. Entering the fray without a dozen top swimmers did not deter the boys and from early on they showed good intent in the freestyle relays, at this point occupying 3rd place out of the 8 schools in attendance. As the gala progressed, our lack of depth made it harder to hold our position with Kearsney and Maritzburg College making steady inroads on our total. Ultimately, 3 unfortunate disqualifications put paid to our hopes of a “bronze” finish as we slumped to 5th overall. A humbling experience considering we are better than the result suggests.

The final results were as follows:

1. Westville Boys High School
2. Clifton School
3. Kearsney
4. Maritzburg College
5. Hilton College
6. Glenwood
7. Northwood
8. Durban High School



TENNIS

Sam and Josh Black took part in a national tournament in Durban, both boys won their draw's for the Gold U14 (Josh) and Gold Men's junior (Sam). These competitions are open to all around the country and allow players to accumulate points which help to get a ranking on a national level. This is a boost for Sam and Josh who are in pursuit of points to qualify for the Platinum league.

On Monday 18 February, the 1st team played in their penultimate league match against Michaelhouse 1st. The boys played exceptionally well to overwhelm our opponents 16 - 2. Although the 1st team still have a match to play against Maritzburg College they have effectively won the Denness League. An outstanding achievement! The consistently good play of the 2nd

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team has helped them to achieve this win earlier than expected showing that it has truly been a Hilton team effort. The boys who have represented the 1st team this term are Sam Black, Jonathan Harel, Jean-Marc Rey, Joe Hill, Mike Frost and Josh Black.

WATER POLO

Over the weekend of the 16th and 17th of February the Water polo club was busy on a number of fronts. The Junior mixed team and the 6th team played friendly matches against Scottborough High School, the U14A team participated in the Dave Pitcairn Cup in Cape Town and the remainder of the teams played in a fixture away at Michaelhouse.

The U14A team attended the Dave Pitcairn Cup for the first time and performed admirably. The team finished the group stage at the top of their pool with six out of six wins by beating Reddam, Westerford, Wynberg, Clifton, SACS and Somerset College along the way. In the quarter-final the team convincingly brushed aside Pearson 16 - 0 to book a semi-final berth. In the semi-final against St Andrew's the Hilton team created many chances but were unable to convert enough of them and went down narrowly 3 - 4. Although the boys were disappointed not to reach the final, they pulled together to beat SACS 6 - 4 in the 3rd/4th play-off. This was a fantastic achievement for the school, winning eight out of nine matches to finish 3rd in a highly competitive tournament against some of the top water polo schools from around the country.

The 2nds to 5ths, U15A, U15B and U14B all participated in fixtures against the old rival Michaelhouse. It was a very successful day for Hilton who won five of these matches, only losing out narrowly in the two stagger fixtures. The most impressive win of the day was the 2nd team match which Hilton dominated and won 7 - 0.

(Thanks to Jason Sileno for this report)

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