

## YPCC 3rd XI Grand Final 2011/12

### Match Report

by Rob Clancy

Youlden Parkville 78 (IJ Roberston 30) and 115 (A Tucker 46) defeated Parkville District 102 (A Tucker 4/24, J Lenehan 3/6) and 84 (A Tucker 4/12, MT Leeder 3/12).



Above: YPCC 3rd XI Premiers 2011/12

If you ever want proof that this game we love is the most cruelly beautiful sport of all, then the 3rds Grand Final should be Exhibit A.

Even after a couple of sleeps, it's still hard to believe that what looked like a lost cause on Saturday evening could turn within 24 hours into such an incredible success. But let's not jump to the exciting conclusion too soon; as with all good stories, this one starts at the beginning.

Well, for most of us it started at the beginning, which we all knew was 11am Saturday when, after losing the toss (much to Robbo's relief) and being put in, we began our innings without one of our two best batsmen, Owen Jones, who was putting his duties as a caring husband and new father first, as he should.

That wouldn't have been much of a problem except for the fact that at 1 for 2, his replacement - not entirely unrelated to the author of this report - strode to the crease. Then 3 balls later strode right back off again with a cherry on his outside edge and the score at 2 for 3.

On a painfully slow pitch with tennis ball bounce, a slow outfield and swing in the air Robbo hung around as he does, picking off the loose balls while those at the other end bravely fought a losing battle. Pizzey gone for 1, Clancy the same, Holt a defiant 7, Perkins' 14 the second top score, Pattichis 4, Tucker 3, Nandury 0, Leeder 1 and Lenehan zero left us all out for just 78, with Owen stranded not out on 10 after coming in at number 7. So much hope reduced to such a low score so quickly.

If not for Robbo's 30 we would really have been in strife, but on a difficult track at least we had some

runs on the board. It was now up to Parkville District to see if they could match it.

As it turned out, our opponents tried their hardest not to match our score, offering up at least 20 chances, some of which fell just out of reach, while six or seven others were dropped. If catches win matches we were doing our best to hand this particular one to our opponents on a plate, except we probably would have dropped the plate and cut our foot on the broken shards of china strewn across a once pristine floor. But enough of the tortured metaphors!

Luckily our team was well equipped with a battery of quality bowlers at the top of their game. And Nuts Clancy.

Adam Tucker led the way with pace, control and swing to capture 4 for 24 while his opening partner, Subramaniam Nandury - AKA Suby Forester/Sportswagon/WRX/etc - was dreadfully unlucky, returning figures of none for 5 off 7 overs.

Middle Earth's own Mark Leeder provided height, hostility and heat to grab a crucial scalp, and Pirate Pete Pattichis made two decisive breakthroughs. Then jumping James Lenehan surprised a few by grabbing 3 for 6, to wrap up an innings that had threatened to get away from us, but in the end collapsed for just 102 - the last 7 wickets tumbling for only 15 runs.

So at the halfway point of the match we trailed by 24 runs and considering that we batted first and fielded appallingly, felt we were roughly even overall. All that was needed was to survive about 17 overs before stumps on day one. How hard could that be? Ahem.

It actually seemed pretty easy until both Ian "Stobie Pole" Robertson and Dangerous David Pizzey departed with only 10 on the board, then a couple of debatable decisions saw Messrs Holt & Clancy on their way too, with the score on 21.

Oh, then 7 runs later Pete P was gone, with Owen J following soon after!

So when stumps were drawn after the first of the allotted three days, we were effectively 6 for 12 in our second innings and far from setting a defensible total. Hence the "lost cause" sentiments expressed above, despite the relentless optimism being expressed by captain Robbo (which at that stage even he probably didn't believe!).

When day two dawned there were two things we knew for sure:

1. We needed the tail to put on at least one solid partnership to have any chance of setting a target we could defend, and;
2. There were previously unseen holes in the covers and damp patches at both ends of an already tricky wicket.

But with plenty of dew on the grass and the opposition keen to push on, Robbo made the brave decision not to delay, and that might just have set the tone for an incredible day.

The outfield moisture made bowling a touch more difficult and Adam Tucker and Matty Perkins did the rest. This pair didn't just put on 55 runs, they batted right through the first two hours, first quieting, then demoralising the opposition and slowly, surely, incrementally raising our confidence that something amazing might happen.

Matt shuffled his way around the crease in his trademark way for a stubborn, priceless 19 while Adam combined previously unseen patience with an array of shots he'd been threatening to unleash all summer, to end with 46 runs of his own - easily the match's highest individual score.

They took us out of trouble into relative comfort, while Suby and young Jim hung around just long enough at the end to prolong our opponents' pain by a couple of dozen more crucial runs.

When we were all out for 115 our foes had a target of 92 to chase and we had something worth defending, plus an ever-increasing (and increasingly vocal) band of support around the boundary line. The fun had just begun.

Who else could it be to start the rot than A. Tuxedo Esq. himself, finding an edge that was snaffled at slip. Then a few overs later their dangerman, Pickering was gone after failing to keep a Tuxoid lifter out and deflecting it onto his pegs. 2 for 14. Game on.

As the competition's leading wicket-taker Suby was never going to stay out of the action for long; another edge, another slips catch and they were on the ropes at 3 for 17. Then he used every ounce of his all-wheel drive traction to clinch a caught and bowled and it was 4 for 22.

There would be no let up, even as their batsmen did their best to hit their way out of trouble. Mark Leeder came on and produced a chance that Suby somehow stooped low enough to snatch at mid-on. 5 for 36. Much merriment ensued, but we were only half way home with a faulty fuel guage, dodgy shockers and a bumpy ride ahead.

The other mob steadied, their captain and number 7 batting patiently to put on 27 painful runs for the seventh wicket. But cometh the hour, cometh the pirate, and Pete Pattichis knocked over the off stump to break the partnership and put us back on track for the time being.

All the while, our fielding had gone up several notches, morale was good, Robbo was rotating the bowlers, nothing was getting past OJ's gloves and the YPCC contingent under those big fig trees was swelling in both number and volume.

But with 4 wickets still in hand the opposition got to within 12 runs of their target and you could have cut the tension with one of those really crappy half-blunt green-handled garden implements they sell for \$2.99 right near the checkouts at Bunnings.

With the pride of Terang, Jim Lenehan, sending down unplayable outswingers from one end, big Mark Leeder had the ball at the other. No sooner had he let go of a juicy full-toss outside off than the batsman hammered it to cover where Pirate Pete took an absolute stunner of a catch, diving forward, literally millimetres from the turf.

That made it 7 for 80 and while we were confident against their tailenders, the target was way too close for comfort, so what did big Leeds do? Only knocked their number 9's middle peg right out of the ground!

Now with 2 wickets remaining, their captain still in at one end and a renowned hitter at the other they were just 8 runs shy of victory. Suby, bowling uphill, was as surprised as anyone to see their skipper dance down the wicket on the first ball of the over attempting to hit him over the Alfred Hospital and miss completely.

Then, after consistently bringing the ball into the right-handers throughout the match, our man casually produced a perfect leg-cutter that took the edge and deposited itself straight into OJ's waiting mitts.

9 wickets down, one to go, but only 8 runs from defeat. What is a captain to do? To his eternal credit, Robbo bravely took the ball from the in-form Leeds and handed it to the man who had put us in with a chance of victory in the first place.

A typically smooth & slithering Tucker inswinger found a crease-bound pad. The appeal went up from all around the wicket and dozens around the boundary. The umpire's finger was raised and time stopped for one glorious, screaming, cavorting minute as anyone present with even a milligram of

YPCC in their veins joined in the kind of celebration that some of us have waited decades to experience.

Had there been less at stake it still would have been a great match, but delivering us our first senior flag in 9 seasons and our second in a single weekend (well done to the Powerful Owls!), this was truly a contest that few of us will ever forget.

We don't play cricket for moments like these; we play it because we truly love the game, aware that the more we love it the more it can hurt us. What these moments teach us, on the all-too-rare occasions they come along, is that it's worth risking pain and disappointment for something so perfect.

Thank you to everyone who was a part of this premiership and especially to Robbo for holding it all together, Barney Phillips for running the place and Corey Anderson for having the grace and class to be the big part of it that he was.

Cheers  
Uncle Nutso.