

Middle-order Fights Key for Fairfield and Racecourse in SDC/Wray and Nephews National Community T/20 Cricket Competition Semifinal Wins

Former two-times champions Racecourse Cricket Team and first-time finalists Fairfield United Cricket Team will battle to be crowned winner of the SDC/Wray and Nephew National community T20 Competitions 2021 after semifinal victories over Links United Cricket Teams and Paradise Cricket Team respectively. The two teams who advanced through the play-off stage last week will meet in the championship game on Sunday, November 28, at the Noranda Sports Complex.

The just over 100 mix of support players and personnel cushioned the void left by the absence of spectators and created a tense atmosphere at the Ultimate Sports Complex for two keenly contested semifinals. In the first game under sweltering heat and a lightning-quick outfield, Fairfield won the toss and decided to bowl first against Paradise, who had not played since their Super-8 quarter-finals win over Old Harbour Cricket Team two weeks ago at Chedwin Park.

Openers Okeeno Farquharson and Shanda Francis found the opening over from Leighton Leslie tough to negotiate. However, Farquharson soon found his range and picked up the game's first boundary with a lovely shot down the ground. He also struck a six, sending the SDC officials scampering towards the billowing smoke from the Ultimate Jerk Centre at the southern end. The two added 25 runs in the opening four overs, but Reon Edwards soon delivered two telling blows, with Francis first getting into a tangle before skying a simple catch to Jamie Merchant at square-leg for 5 runs. Before new batsman Howard Palmer had reached the non-striker's end, Edwards struck again as Farquharson, who made 19 picked out Merchant at backward-point from a short-pitched delivery outside the off-stump.

At 25 runs for 2 wickets, the pair of Howard Palmer and Paul Palmer Jr., the winning combination from their Super-8 game, joined forces and set about rebuilding the innings. The two had to do it in singles as they showed good judgment and quick feet in pressing the Fairfield team into mistakes. There was the occasional boundary in the partnership with Howard getting one Four while Paul swept and drove confidently for three boundaries. Fairfield kept rotating the bowlers, which soon paid off with Sherdon Allen striking immediately removing Howard Palmer for 13. Two deliveries later, the outside edge of Shahid Crooks was found as he walked back for a duck with Fairfield 56 for 4.

After an additional 20 runs, the prize wicket of Paul Palmer Jr. fell as he was adjudged Leg Before Wicket off the bowling of Merchant for a top score of 24 runs. That soon opened the gates for Fairfield and despite two sixes from captain Rohan James who made 17 runs, it was not enough to spark a revival as Paradise were bowled-out for 116.

Merchant ended with 3 wickets for 27 runs, including the wicket of James, while Allen had 2 wickets for 15 runs and Edwards 2 wickets for 19 runs.

With 117 runs needed for victory from 120 deliveries, Jermaine Morgan and Sherdon Allen walked to the crease looking to maximize on the powerplay and but found boundaries hard to come by early. With Allen, who had picked up a hamstring injury in the field, both batsmen were hampered from taking quick singles, which may have led to the dismissal of Morgan, who in searching for his first boundary was caught by Jevaun Simpson off the bowling of Shahid Crooks for 11.

In walked the dangerous Triston Coleman arms held wide and head held high from his half-century a week ago. He took little time to settle and cleared the boundary on two occasions threatening the game in a flash. However, he watched as Howard Palmer had Allen caught for 16 once again Simpson showing a safe pair of hands with the score of 35 runs for 2 wickets. That dismissal brought captain Brian Clarke to the crease after dropping himself for the last game. He and Coleman added 19 runs before it took something special from Crooks to send Coleman back for 12 runs. Trying to hit Palmer over wide Long-On, the ball held up in the wind with Crooks running around 20 meters to his right before putting in a full-length dive in front of the players' pavilion,

taking the ball inches away from the ground. That seemingly sparked the belief in the Paradise team and before long, they also had the wicket of Merchant for just 1 run with the score 69 runs for 4 wickets after 8.4 overs.

That, however, would be the only success for Paradise for the next 6.4 overs as Clarke and Courtney Allen dropped anchor in taking the team closer to victory. Clarke was the aggressor in the partnership, as he hit three fours and two towering sixes in a top score of 37 runs. Allen was a bit more subdued and batted right through to the end but still managed two fours and one six.

Paradise would eventually pick up the wicket of Clarke, but by then, the equation saw Fairfield needing 16 runs from 28 balls and it took them only 9 more balls to overhaul the target as they got to 118 runs for 5 wickets, Allen not out on 24.

Howard Palmer ended with 2 wickets for 26 runs; this was not enough to give his team victory.

The second semifinal was even more entertaining as Racecourse defeated Links United by 5 wickets.

In the heat of the 1:30pm sun Links United won the toss and decided to bat first with the knowledge of familiar conditions also in their favor. Openers Marlon Pinnock and Stephan Alexander were keen on giving Links United a good start but that plan could've been tossed away in the first couple of overs but the Racecourse fielders gave fast bowler Romario Edwards no help as Pinnock was put down twice from sitters. Between those missed opportunities and his dismissal Pinnock hit two fours and one six on his way to 23 from 24 balls before his luck ran out, Chevonie Grant the cause of his dismissal, bowling his first over from the Southern end.

Marlon Johnson walked in to face his first delivery, which he dispatched easily for four as he pounced on a short ball outside off-stump before beating backward-Point. Two deliveries later, Johnson again found the boundary and before long, he was made 8 runs from 4 balls. His stay was short-lived as the next over, Alexander drove a ball off his back-foot to the left of Extra-Cover, but only Johnson was interested in the run. With both batsmen at the striker's end, Johnson was left stranded and with a long walk back to the pavilion. Captain Othniel Pennant was not far behind as he was caught for 5 runs.

The enigmatic Deethmar Anderson then walked to the crease like only he could and joined Alexander in what was an innings defining partnership. Anderson took some time to get going, but when he did, it was both elegant and entertaining, with his sixes down the ground completed with a pose and powerful fist pump with Alexander. The two took the scores past the 100-run mark before Alexander was dismissed for 33, scoring 105 runs for 5 wickets.

After going for another boundary, Anderson was the next to go for a top score of 37 runs. Amoi Campbell added some flare to the Links United innings with two sixes and two fours in a 10-ball knock of 22 runs. From there Venroy Laign 12 runs and Alwayne Simms, who was the last man out for 15 runs helped Links United post a challenging score of 163 runs for 9 wickets, with Edwards brushing off the missed opportunities off his bowling to end with 3 wickets for 24 runs.

At the halfway mark, 164 runs may have looked too big a task for the Racecourse batsmen, but only if you were a Links United supporter. Wayne Davis started the innings with a boundary alongside fellow opener Marcel Parchment, also getting one. The two fell 15 runs apart, the first Parchment for 5 runs followed by Davis for 10 runs from a spectacular catch from Laing running to his left from long-On but his dive at the end came at a cost as it meant he would play no further part in the contest. 5 deliveries later, the score was 39 runs for 3 wickets when Alwayne Simms trapped Erron Downer in front for 6 runs and he had two wickets in the 4th over.

A fourth-wicket should have followed when a sliding stop on the mid-wicket boundary and a return to the bowler's end from Simms saw Damar Duncan midway down the pitch but Links United Captain Pennant could not gather the ball after three attempts to affect the run-out. That miss proved to be costly as Duncan and Gopie added 46 runs for the 4th wicket. Duncan used his second life to punish the Links United bowlers with two fours and three sixes in a 24-ball innings of 34 runs. Gopie made 25 from 21 before spinner Tian Jarett had him caught breaking the 4th wicket stand. Duncan went 12 runs after with Campbell the bowler and the match in the balance at 97 runs for 5 wickets.

With 67-runs needed from 8.4 overs, Captain Krishmar Santokie walked to the crease and with him Dwight Stewart. Stewart was doing it in singles while Santokie found the found boundaries in between some smart running. It took a while before Stewart hit his first boundary, and it came after being hit on the head by a fearsome short deliver by Anderson to start his spell. A call for a helmet and a quick assessment from the medical staff and Stewart was ready again for the battle with the next short delivery dispatched to the backward-square boundary for four. That shake-up also saw Stewart clearing the boundary with six, but it was all left to Santoki who's 4 fours and two sixes lit up the Ultimate Sports Complex. It was only fair that in the fading light and with the sun setting behind the western cloud, Santokie would settle the contest off the first ball of the 19th over, hitting the ball down the ground past Campbell for 4 runs.

The shot sparked wild celebrations from the Racecourse cricket team and staff. Racecourse achieved victory at 164 runs for 4 wickets with Santoki 41 runs and Stewart 28 runs at the end, with the two adding an unbroken 67 run partnership.

Jarrett with 2 wickets for 17 runs and Simms 2 wickets for 39 runs carried the fight for Links United, who will be looking back at their missed opportunities.

St. Anns Links United will face off against Westmoreland's Paradise Cricket Team for third and fourth place position on Saturday, November 27, at the Noranda Sports Complex.