

OB Collegians stamp dominance in annual match

Christ's College Old Boys XI (127/10): M Davidson 41, H Davison 40 (H Falls-Anderson 3/22) lost to Old Boys Collegians (OBC) Selection XI (218/10): D Hunter 106, B Hanrahan 20, B Breitmeyer 20 (M Davidson 5/35, C Pettit 2/48) hosted by H Anderson @ Valley of Peace, Christchurch

The College Old Boys' match on 12 February against St Bede's was thwarted when the opposition cancelled with just four days to go – much to the disappointment of esteemed College Old Boy and winemaker extraordinaire Hugo Davison.

Thankfully, Hamish Anderson managed to assemble an Old Boys Collegians (OBC) side to take us on. This OBC Invitational XI comprised a mix of the top three OBC teams, with three of those players being members of the recent College Gillette Cup-winning side – namely Benjamin Breitmeyer, Matthew Lewis, and Hamish Falls-Anderson. The OBC XI was stacked with both a daunting line-up of batting and bowling talent.

With the ground in superb condition as always, thanks to Ant Polson, both teams arrived in great spirits, looking forward to the day ahead. The Valley of Peace has a longstanding highest score of 153* from Fred Shaw way back in the 1950s. However, given the calibre of some of the OBC batsmen, it was thought Shaw's record might be in danger. With this in mind, Old Boys skipper Hugo Davison and College Old Boy Harrison Lund, who captained OBC, agreed that the OBC XI should bat first.

After an introduction to the Valley and explanation of some local rules for those who were new to the ground, the game began with Scott Willoughby and Dylan Hunter facing the always deadly Hugo Davison with his two-piece Kookaburra red king in hand.

There was swing aplenty for both Hugo and fellow opening bowler Charles Porter but Willoughby and Hunter were equal to the task, batting conservatively and seeing off the new ball. Following a fine spell from Davison, Valley stalwart and reverse swing demon James Thomson was introduced into the attack. It only took him three balls to swing one away, taking Willoughby's outside edge and carrying to first slip. OBC was now 29/1.

Fresh off a premier 100 the preceding day, Nic Clarke came to the crease only to be dismissed soon after by a truly unplayable delivery from Porter that hooped in and clattered the off stump. Hunter then began to loosen the shackles and showed the College Old Boys team what he was made of. With some fine strokeplay to all parts of the ground, he was well supported by Hanrahan, Hooper, and Breitmeyer all contributing valuable cameos.

Former Canterbury bowler Michael Davidson entered the fray and hit the ground running, dismissing Breitmeyer in his first over when the score was 157/5. Hunter continued forth very nicely and soon after brought up his 100 with a flowing drive through the covers. Dylan batted absolutely superbly, and, at this stage, Fred Shaw was turning in his grave expecting his record to be overtaken. Not to be, though, when Hunter was bowled soon after by Davidson. Michael bowled a superb spell with excellent flight, guile and changes of pace.

He went on to take another three, cleaning up the tail with some great variations, finishing with figures of 5/35. After being 5/160, the College Old Boys went into lunch happy to have restricted the OBC XI to 218 all out.

After a particularly long lunch break, where many libations were consumed in the warm afternoon sun, play resumed. The opening batsmen might have regretted their lunchtime ales when they saw Breitmeyer and Lewis, both ex-College 1st XI and Canterbury U19 seamers, coming in off the long run. It didn't take Breitmeyer long to show his class, cleaning out Hugo Patterson with one that shaped away beautifully after just three balls.

Fast-forward to a horrible mix up, which wasn't particularly pleasant on the eye and the score was 2/2. Still euphoric after his five-wicket bag, Davidson strode to the crease and took charge, seeing off the treacherous opening spells of Breitmeyer and Lewis. Spin was then introduced in the form of Hamish Falls-Anderson, another recent College 1st XI player, and Dylan Hunter, who both bowled superbly in a partnership, with Hunter in particular generating some serious turn and bounce. Soon after, he was rewarded with a stumping.

With the score at 52/3, captain Hugo came to the crease determined to put his beloved College team into a winning position with some elegant strokes through the covers. Davidson then fell LBW to Falls-Anderson for a well-compiled 41.

At drinks, the OBC XI was on top, with the Old Boys at 69/4. With two wickets to Falls-Anderson in the first over after drinks, it began to look like the end might have been nigh for the Old Boys XI with the score dwindling at 74/6 but Hugo continued, batting intelligently and dispatching the loose balls to take College to 102 before the next wicket fell. Sadly, Holderness and Porter fell in quick succession and it looked all but over. Hugo and Jim Blakely, back for his second innings, batted well and made a fist of the 10th wicket partnership until Hugo was bowled, giving the OBC Invitational XI the victory by 86 runs.

As the post-match drinks flowed, many stories were shared among the 14 College Old Boys who played across the two teams, proceeded by speeches from captains Davison and Lund, who both highlighted what a spectacular day it was at such a special ground.

Match report by Hamish Falls-Anderson. Photos by Emma Breitmeyer.