

## **Midi CC - Match reports 2011**

### **Midi vs Brockwell 49ers** 24/25 September

Ah, september the 24th, another indian summer in St. Pons de Mauchiens, temperatures soaring, and the grapes have been harvested for next annum's vineger stocks. This can mean only one thing,....YES....it's Midi's annual knees up with the Brockwell 49er's, would it be an exaggeration to call it 'a festival of cricket'?....er.....yes.

Nevertheless, the weekend was a fine display of craftily compiled single figure scores, and the consistant bowling of wides and long hops.

Only joking, there were some consistant performances and cunning stunts, notably Ken Miller's pitching of cricket balls on a length and his even more unfathomable umpiring skills, were a sight to behold. And Alex Laljee's match-saving innings of 36 not out was a lesson in bludgeoning the oppostion into submission.

The match also contained a glimpse into the future, as Dom George captained his last match before retiring to the ranks, and one of Midi's French youth academy players took his first two competative wickets, showing great promise.

The previous weeks century maker, Nick Allison, carried on where he left off, with a batting masterclass of run compiling, as he accumulated another massive total of 4, before being bamboozled by McBurnie's 'straight one', and surrendered 'bat before wicket'; a decision greeted with howls of laughter from an incenced club president. Midi won by two wickets.....i think.

Then came sunday, as the sun rose on another splendid day in St. Pons, as the dew evaporated off the goal posts, and Brockwell 49er's downed egnog and redbull to disipate a raging collective hangover. The omens didn't look too bright for a 49er's victory, especially as 'star' player ,J. McBurnie was taking up his role as the prospective new Midi Captain.

Brockwell cruised to a classy 120-odd all out, with Tim (the one with the beard), forming the backbone of the innings with an excellent 42; before slamming a six bound straight drive into the grasping hand of Paul Rogers(SLAP!). Midi never dropped a catch all weekend! ???....this is a club record.

Midi's reply usually contains some kind of mini, or maxi, collapse, but the experimental opening partnership of Rob 'the mullet' Bowyer, and Steve Field (in what could be his swansong for Midi.....he's moving back to the UK????),

put on 60 plus for the first wicket. Rob decided to retire on 50, leaving Steve to bat out the rest of the inning to finish on 32 not out; not a bad cricketing epitaph for an important member of the club....his wife makes great cakes.

The innings was finished off in brutal style by Dom George, with three consecutive fours; he says hes gonna get his eyes tested, but on this form.....i dunno.

All together, a splendid weekend full of the intricacies of the cricketing art. And both teams were a dazzling example of one of the most intricate arts in the game.....beer drinking.

See you again next year boys,....but maybe not after reading this drive!

### **Midi vs Ladymead** 17/18 Sept

A balmy September day saw Midi welcome their first guests, Ladymead CC, to what looks like to be an exciting series of Autumn friendlies. After the end of league duty Midi were eager to cross the white line and play some cricket. However, this eagerness was joined by a series of injuries that will weigh heavily upon Midi's medical team, with several players suffering sore ones; Marc Dalling (finger knack), Ed Hamilton (back knack) and Paul Rodgers (liver knack).

Midi bowled first with their most Franco line-up to date. Debuts were handed to Alexis and notably Pierre Zivanovic, the first member of the club's youth setup to play for the senior team. Just one part of a long conveyer belt Zivanovic's presence, and more importantly his display in the field, is a testament to all the hard work done by youth coaches Dom George and Dalling.

Ladymead opened the batting with Scum and Rover. Scum faced the first ball and was skittled by a Hamilton snorter. Scum trudged off to be replaced by Edinburgh educated

and Barbados first class hopeful Coley. Coley and Rover were to put on a show the likes of which St Pons has not seen before.

Midi's bowling options took a blow when Hamilton did his back in during his first over. An old man's injury, despite his tender years. Hamilton did well to hide in the slips, as all the bowlers took severe punishment. Rover scoring a slightly dishonest but powerful 100 and Coley an excellent 145 before being run out by some smart work from Nick Allison. Coley's innings in particular was majestic. A mixture of powerful hitting and Caribbean flair that was a treat for the spectator.

A tough day for the fielding side saw Ladymead score 340. Particular mention must go to George's infatigability in pounding against tough opposition and David Amoros' gazelle like fielding. Amoros is now a staple for anyone who has seen Midi play and an example to us all.

After the best tea in French cricket Midi got off to a good start with Rogers (49) and Allison (36) scoring quickly, but accurate bowling from youngster Mowgli and old hands Mackay and The Eggman soon made inroads into the top order. Lalljee continued his seasons good form with the bat chipping in with a well constructed 37. Finally, Midi ran out of wickets to fall 100 runs short of the target.

Sunday saw a change in weather with bleary eyes welcomed by grey skies. Midi's commitment to youth in these friendlies saw a change in line up. Before the game more caps were handed out to young French hopefuls. This time the recipients were the eager Matteo Martinez and Quentin Saulnier.

Midi batted first and were treated to the Nick Allison Show. Allison scored a wonderful 105 not out, a score he has been threatening for some time, and Lalljee contributed a useful 22. Midi finished on 220 and after a sausage roll, were eager to take the field. A major factor in this was the return of Rob Bowyer.

Bowyer's mullet flowing in the wind is one of French cricket's finest sights, a sight that the St Pons public has been sadly robbed of this year. Bowling with control and wisdom Midi ripped through the Ladymead ranks. However, there was to be a sting in the tail. A change in the order saw Rover and Coley come together at wickets 6 and 7, where they continued Saturday's onslaught. The runs were knocked off quickly and Ladymead returned to Sussex with a 2-0 series win.

Post-match drinks saw Midi Captain Dalling and Ladymead manager Anthony Goode exchange mementos reflecting a great weekend with cricket played in the spirit it should.

### **Midi CC lose cup match and then their captain - 24th July 2011**

Midi CC once again conspired with the cricketing gods to continue their run of defeats this season by going down to Toulouse in the Siddalls Cup competition on 24 July.

They were then confronted with the resignation of captain Dom George.

In a pithy but poignant email sent to the team the day following the five-wicket second-round loss (Midi had a bye in the first round), George said he had been planning to hand over the captaincy for some time.

"Now seems as good a time as any," he wrote, with the pain of another Midi batting collapse fresh in the memory. "I hope there are people in the Club who would like to take it on. I certainly think that there are people who would do a good job."

George, Player of the Year in 2009 and a driving force in the club for five years – he always takes the wheel of his mini-bus on away games – admitted after the match that his contribution with both bat and well had suffered this season from lack of practice.

Vice-captain Marc Dalling will take the helm for the immediate future as Midi concluded the competitive part of the season and headed towards the social cricket calendar in September.

Midi took some positives from the defeat at Toulouse – they fielded a full team for the first time at an away game, they had an Official Scorer poised to record their first win, and they could cite as a mitigating factor in their defeat the alarming deterioration in the weather as the home team began the 137-run chase for victory.

It had all started so well under cloudy skies, with the reliable Alex Lalljee (17) and John McBurnie combining for a 74-run second-wicket partnership that should have provided the foundation for a score well beyond 150.

But when McBurnie departed at 127 after a well-deserved 54, which included 10 fours, Midi's wheels once again fell off with the last six wickets falling for a pitiful nine runs.

Toulouse's best bowler was Tom Lovejoy who returned figures of four for 8 in two overs, concocting a weird but effective mixture of wides, rank bad balls and the odd straight delivery to completely bamboozle the Midi lower order. The Official Scorer confessed to opening an additional box in the bowling figures to accommodate Lovejoy's 10-ball second over.

As the skies darkened further, Toulouse who had won the toss, went into bat and driving rain sent the players scurrying from the field.

The break was brief but the rain had created conditions that prompted strike bowlers Ed Hamilton and Dom George to bowl off shortened run-ups, handing an early momentum to Toulouse in the moderate run chase.

Led by opener Fergus Houlden, the home side rattled off the runs in 22 overs with the loss of five wickets.

Houlden, who hit 13 fours, had looked set for a century but Hamilton dismissed him on 71 when he instinctively held on to a scorching drive for a brilliant caught and bowled.

Wily veteran spinner Dave Mickleborough was the pick of Midi bowlers returning creditable figures of two for 20 in his allotted seven overs.

In a late development, the shock and trauma of yet another Midi defeat has prompted the Official Scorer and sometime player Reg Gratton to seek solace in a far-away country. "I need time to regroup," he told Midi's correspondent. "New Zealand looks about as far away as you can get."

However, he has promised to return for the 2012 season and has said he will never again describe David Amoros as the "talismanic" Frenchman.

### **MIDI ÇC EDGE CLOSER TO FIRST WIN OF THE SEASON – 12 JUNE, 2011**

Midi Cricket Club edged closer to their first win of the season on Sunday 12 June, going down by only 21 runs to Toulouse CC after chasing a formidable 278 on their home ground, the visitors' innings highlighted by a sparkling century from Australian Brett Trudgett.

Midi's runmakers all actually made runs but their top scorer, Captain Dom George (57), Ben Morgan (45), Paul Rogers (25) and John McBurnie (24) all lost their wickets when a big innings beckoned to take the team to victory.

In contrast opener Trudgett and Toulouse Captain Neil Warren shared a match-winning

fifth wicket 104-run partnership at a time when Midi looked poised to remove the opposition for well under 200 runs.

So much was in Midi's favour going into the fourth match of the 2011 league campaign at St Pons de Mauchiens – a team sheet that had 11 names on it for the first time, an Official Scorer and First Aid Officer reporting for duty, an enthusiastic, though tardy, home crowd, a blue sky and a green oval that looked as if it could have been imported from a rustic English village, although sadly without the 17th century pub nestling behind the ancient oak at deep square leg.

But again it wasn't to be. Toulouse won the toss and elected to bat, a decision that looked decidedly questionable when George's first over claimed opening bat Paul Lawrie, caught by Morgan, and then saw wicketkeeper Steve Field drop an easy catch next ball when Feargus Houlden got an edge.

Field, who took three impressive catches in the previous home match against Noe, told this correspondent after the match that he had not felt himself, a confession which explained why the slips cordon had positioned itself further than usual from the guardian of the stumps.

Both George and Rogers were bowling with accuracy and guile and the pressure told on Toulouse when Houlden presented an easy caught and bowled to Rogers with the score on 38. Veteran spinner Dave Mickleborough then picked up the wicket of Andy Knee in his first over, a brilliant instinctive slip catch by Marc Dalling, and Toulouse were struggling at 58 for three.

But Trudgett steadied the ship and after steering the score past the century with Nick "Gobby" Brooks, he and Warren took the score steadily past the 200 mark, the Australian boldly bringing up his century with his eighth six, a soaring smite over deep mid-off.

After man-of-the-match Trudgett departed for 113, the bottom order added a breezy 60 plus to finish on 277 for nine, a target that seemed beyond Midi, given the record of previous run chases this season. George was the pick of the Midi bowlers, returning figures of 3 for 55. Rogers and Lalljee picked up two apiece.

However, openers Rogers and Nick Allison launched the innings with a ferocious onslaught taking the score to 39 in five overs before Rogers, on 25, then Allison, on 14, fell to Philip Fermanel, both caught by Andy Knee, one a brilliant over-the-shoulder effort.

George joined the steady Alex Lalljee and they took the score past 100 in 16 overs, ahead of the Toulouse run rate, before Lalljee was bowled by Brooks on 16 with the score at 101.

McBurnie joined George and the pair added 52 runs in what promised to be a match-winning partnership before Midi's nemesis Trudgett came on to clean bowl them both in consecutive overs.

Morgan, coming in at number six, gave the home side some hope, smashing five sixes in a swashbuckling 45 and with Marc Dalling hitting some form and the ball, Midi swept past the 200 mark with the home crowd sensing an unexpected victory.

But Midi's ability to snatch defeat out of the jaws of victory was once again in evidence when Morgan, sensing a quick single, set off like a train from the bowler's end only to find himself face to face with Dalling in the same crease.

Dalling nobly sacrificed his wicket, a gesture that followed what could have been a far more painful sacrifice when a ball earlier breached his lower defences and smashed his protective box. A plastic shard which ejected itself on impact is to be mounted and will take pride of place on the Dalling household mantelpiece.

Morgan valiantly tried to keep the runs flowing but the target was beyond the Midi tailenders though French talisman David Amoros and the doughty Mickleborough stayed together at the end, adding 13 runs for Midi to finish on a creditable 256 for nine.

Captain George, who led by example with his season's best score and three wickets, can take heart from this performance as Midi travel to Toulouse on June 26 for the return match.

## MIDI CC vs NOE-GASGOGNE - 29 May 2001

### MIDI CC RUN NOE-GASGOGNE CLOSE IN MIDI'S BEST PERFORMANCE SO FAR IN 2011

NOE-GASGOGNE 221, Midi CC 193

Noé, batting first, posted an unspectacular but competitive total of 221 all-out. Restricted by some hostile bowling from Ed Hamilton (1-25) and Dom George (2-23), and some acrobatics in the field by John McBurnie, who singlehandedly must have saved 30+ runs. It was left to Alex Lalljee's effective, if unpredictable, Tremlett-esque deliveries to finish off the tail, to post the impressive figures of 4-21.

Looking at Midi's batting form of late, one could be forgiven in expecting a crushing defeat in the region of a hundred plus runs; but you would not have considered the appallingly awful "wickets" they had to bat on in the previous *débauche's* at ABCC and Noé's home venues. One resembling a plastic cheese grater patchily rendered with a fine layer of plaster of paris with dry-rot, the other a fine approximation of an Irish peat bog spliced with smattering of no-mans land, awaiting the next missile from "German international", Bipin, to swerve off an unassuming crater and smash into some innocent wickets.

Alas, the Midi Cricket club can boast, quoting the venerable Paul Rogers, "...the best playing surface in the south-west of France". And he should know, because he began the Midi reply like a runaway train, scoring 34 runs off a paltry 20 balls, before he was derailed by his over enthusiasm and missed a yorker on middle stump! The infamous Bipin could only watch with frustration as ball after ball went flying to the boundary, he was not going to repeat his 4 for 4 from the previous meeting.

The exit of Rogers, led to the entry of Alex Lalljee to join Nick Allison, left by his opening partner on a score of only three from their 40 partnership. It was consolidation time, and Lalljee wasted little time before demonstrating his almost legendary "willow wall" batting method, read as frustrating defence. Allison saw this as an opportunity to unleash a wide spectrum of shots to various parts of the ground. Reaching 44 he unwisely attempted to get to fifty with a six to the longest part of the ground, and was caught inside the ropes by a diving Bipin, who had misjudged it somewhat. Would this trigger, what has become the MCC's *maladie* in recent years, the infamous acronym that is the "MCCC" (Midi Cricket Club Collapse). It seemed so, when Lalljee exited for a well accumulated 24, in the next over! After Allison and Lalljee had contributed a 70 partnership, Midi needed a similar contribution from the dynamic duo of Captain Dom George and John McBurnie, coming together at just over a hundred runs behind, and only the tail to follow. It was looking good, with George especially finding the boundary with ease. Confidence was raised even more when McBurnie's trademark cut shot whistled into the fence. The score advanced past 150, when McBurnie unexpectedly lost his wicket having scored a promising 13.

The task of rescuing what looked like a comfortable win, now rested on the ample shoulders of Captain George. More boundaries flowed from the bat, but to the disbelief of mainly himself, George played an over ambitious shot at a straight-ish delivery and heard the nightmarish sound of leather on stumps; out for 34.

Not even the "Talismanic Frenchman" David Amoros could save Midi now, as he surrendered for a well crafted duck. Some resistance was provided by Ed Hamilton and Steve Field, but alas the writing was on the wall. Leaving just enough time for a verbose cameo innings of 14 runs from the number eleven of a ten man team, Peter Hall. Who played a man of the match performance with his mouth, as he heartily slagged down a petulant member of the opposition; a side not shy when it comes to gamesmanship. I'd like to say they were an unappealing bunch of chaps, but I'm afraid to say that they, NEVER, stop appealing.

In summing up, this was a match that Midi should have won, but was lost by individual

errors by batsmen who should have known better. But positively it was Midi's best performance of the season so far, and the spectre of the "MCCC" never really materialised. Hopefully banished from these match reports forever!

### **MIDI CC HIT THE ROAD AND A BRICK WALL – 14-15 May, 2011**

Midi Cricket Club's hopes of recording their first-ever league win on the road were cruelly dashed when they crashed to defeat in back-to-back matches at the hands of Noe-Gascogne and Armagnac-Bigorre.

Confidence was high going into the opening games of the 2011 league campaign but Midi CC had not bargained for Noe's new left-arm strike bowler Chougle Bipin who tore through the top order in the first match and helped to ensure a thumping 163-run victory for the home team.

With spirits dampened, Midi crawled to 109 in 35.3 overs the following day against Armagnac-Bigorre who easily rattled off the runs to win by eight wickets at their Seissan ground.

Ten-man Midi won the toss against Noe and sent the home side in to bat on a rain-drenched pitch, a decision that seemed to backfire as the first three batsmen notched 149 runs in 25 overs, led by Jotin Patel who was run out 11 short of his century thanks to some brilliant work in the field by John McBurnie.

Nick Allison's three-wicket haul in the last over as the rain worsened restricted Midi's target to 221 and lifted the gloom, spurring hopes that a first away win was a possibility. But Midi's reality check came in the shape of Noe fast bowler Bipin, who played for Duesseldorf Blackcaps in Germany last season. He quickly sent back the top order, Paul Rogers, Alex Lalljee and John McBurnie without scoring to leave Midi reeling at 11 for 4. Bipin, bowling with accuracy and venom, also picked up the vital wicket of Nick Allison for seven as the rain lifted and the sky brightened. Only a spirited 19 from American import Ken Miller helped push the score to 57. Bipin finished with figures of 4 for 4. French talisman David Amoros followed up his undefeated 13 in the 25 April friendly against the No Hope X1 with an unbeaten 4 to keep the Tricolore flying.

Licking their wounds and without vice-captain Marc Dalling, who had a pressing filial engagement back home in Montblanc, Midi went into the match against Armagnac-Bigorre with nine men and a new strategy, based loosely on captain Dom George's assessment of how many Armagnacs his squad had consumed the night before.

Armagnac-Bigorre won the toss and sent Midi in to bat on a strip that made no attempt to disguise itself as anything but artificial, an undulating mixture of green, grey and white with lime dust providing an interesting *divertissement*.

Rogers and Lalljee made a slow but steady start before the now predictable collapse which saw Midi crash to 12 for three in the fifth over. George's decision to move Amoros and wicketkeeper Steve Field up the order did not go as planned with both batsmen back in the pavilion without scoring. Field was beaten by a wicked ball from fast bowler Mysore Preetham which looked unplayable and proved to be. Preetham, who sent back Rogers and Amoros was the pick of the Armagnac bowlers, finishing with figures of 15 for 3.

Allison and George brought some respectability to the score with Allison, surprisingly alert after flying in from Vancouver on Friday, top scoring on 34 and George last out on 24.

Chasing a moderate target of 110, Armagnac, who were also playing with only nine men, never looked in trouble. Though opener Preetham went cheaply, bowled by Rogers with the score on 11, Paul Spencer, supported by captain Tony Hands (24) and Martin Hayward (not out 28), reached the target in the 25th over.

Spencer not only top scored with an unbeaten 40 but also showed his culinary skills by providing the pork pies and sausages at the tea interval.

Midi's dismal weekend was not helped by a rib injury to Field suffered when he stretched for a wide ball from Rogers. He had to leave the field and he may be in doubt for Midi's next match at home against Noe-Gascogne.

## **MIDI CC FALTER IN OPENING FRIENDLY AGAINST NO HOPE XI - Monday 25 April, 2011.**

Midi Cricket Club, chasing a moderate target of 112 in their opening match of the 2011 campaign, failed to avenge last year's defeat by the No Hope XI and fell 22 runs short. Two needless runouts amid a middle order collapse saw the home side stagger to 74 for eight after a solid opening stand of 35 and only a gallant rearguard knock from talismanic French representative David Amoros gave the innings a level of respectability. The No Hope XI, reached a formidable 322 in last year's friendly and on St Pons de Mauchiens' early-season rich green sward, opted to opening the batting again, ready to gorge on the MCC bowling attack after feasting on traiteur Ken Miller's Family Day BBQ lunch.

But despite a solid 57 runs from New Zealand opening batsman Kieran Williams, which included three consecutive sixes, the MCC bowlers kept a tight rein on the run-rate with new recruit Ed Hamilton achieving a memorable hat-trick in a five-wicket haul to send the visitors tumbling to 80 for 7.

With captain Luke Gunn, last year's batting star, relegating himself to number 9 in the order, the visitors from the East Midlands never looked likely to match last season's score and when both Gunn, on 14, and Williams fell to Hamilton, to give him a fourth wicket, MCC were sniffing victory.

Williams, a semi-pro import at Skipton in Yorkshire's Airedale-Wharfedale Cricket League, had threatened to take the Midi CC bowling apart after hitting veteran spinner David Mickleborough for consecutive sixes but Midi's weekly pre-season practice sessions paid off with a tight fielding performance and held catches.

"Mr Consistency", wicketkeeper Steve Field, pouched two behind the stumps while Miller also took two, one off his own bowling and another brilliantly grasped at deep mid-on to give all-rounder Nick Allison his solitary wicket. Allison also took a difficult catch in the covers off a searing drive to dismiss the dangerous Williams.

A good all-round bowling performance restricted the No Hoppers to 111 from only 27 of the allotted 35 overs, and was spearheaded by medium-pacer Hamilton whose four overs yielded only 16 runs for five wickets, followed by Rogers on 2 for 8 and Miller with 2 for 14.

Under threatening skies and with thunder rumbling in the distance, the two captains elected to forgo the tea interval and MCC openers Rogers and Allison got the home side off to a solid start, aware that the weather might bring the match to an early conclusion. Rogers was the senior partner hitting five fours before falling LBW on 24 to spinner Senthil Kumar but having done enough to lay the foundation for an MCC victory.

Allison and John McBurnie took the score to 50 but then departed in quick succession, both to Kumar, which heralded a dramatic collapse that saw captain Dom George and Hamilton both run out and seven wickets tumble for only 23 runs.

Amoros stopped the rot, coming in at number 10, and, supported by a resolutely defensive Field, he finished undefeated on 13, hitting two fours and demonstrating to the French youngsters who stayed on after the morning batting clinic that cricket is not a uniquely Anglophone game.

Skipper Dom George was understandably disappointed at the result but pleased with his side's fielding performance, particularly the catching, and the form of new recruit Hamilton. "We always seem to push the self-destruct button when we bat. This time it was our running between the wickets. We were cruising at 50 for 1," he told MCC's special correspondent. With three practice sessions scheduled ahead of the opening two league matches on May 14 and 15, George will be focusing on how to avoid unnecessary runouts