**Pakistan Bring Their A-Game to Spytty Park**

Friday 15th July marked an extremely important date in the calendars of both Newport Cricket Club and Glamorgan County Cricket, as the first-class game returned to one of South Wales’ most thriving clubs in the form of Glamorgan vs Pakistan A. Glamorgan’s last appearance occurred at Newport’s former home at Rodney Parade against Yorkshire over 25 years ago, demonstrating the remarkable recent efforts of Newport CC to maintain the standards and reputation of their facilities even at its new home. This game, however, proved that the tradition of the British weather disrupting the cricket season has been a consistent struggle, as the game was typically abandoned by rain. It was therefore quite fitting that the grey clouds loomed above for the majority of the day, delaying the start for approximately fifteen minutes until the club’s valiant effort of protecting the wicket proved its worth.

The crowd begin to grow as the prospect of a game began to appear more likely, and a group of Newport’s junior players formed a guard of honour to mark Glamorgan’s long-awaited return. Glamorgan won the toss and decided to bowl, possibly influenced by the wet conditions, with former Gloucestershire wicket-keeper Cameron Herring set to make his debut for the county. The home side began confidently as seamer DewiPenrhyn-Jones removed Khan for 1 in the second over of the game, suggesting that captain Will Bragg had made the correct decision at the toss. Despite the early wicket, Pakistan’s batsmen continued to counter-attack, as Glamorgan’s bowlers struggled to find the consistency to produce constant wickets. Although the rain-affected outfield initially restricted the batsmen from finding the boundary often, some loose fielding – arguably due to the wet ball – allowed Pakistan to run efficiently between the wickets to maintain the pressure. Mozammil, batting at number three, hit a crucial 65 in order to ease the nerves caused by the first wicket; although the most significant partnership came from Babar Azam (119) and Mohammed Nawaz (55) as they led their side from 196-5 to 301-6 by the time the former was removed by Ruaidhri Smith. As the rain eased and the outfield dried, boundaries began to flow regularly, providing great entertainment for the crowd after an unpromising and dreary morning. The onslaught had clearly affected the young Glamorgan side as the bowlers struggled to maintain their accuracy, allowing Nawaz in particular to accelerate as his half century needed only 34 balls. A flurry of late wickets from Smith (4-76, including a hat trick) in the latter overs meant that Pakistan were 9 down, but their total of 327 from their allocated 50 overs seemed a daunting target for the Welsh county.

Following the tea break, the stubborn clouds continued to restrict any appearance of sunshine, but the crowd remained to support Glamorgan’s challenging chase. Nick Selman and James Kettleborough strode to the middle to open the batting, but only 8 overs later the home side were reeling at 37-3. Captain Will Bragg (61) and Andrew Salter (51) demonstrated their experience in this youthful Glamorgan side, as Owen Morgan (29) was the only other player to pass 20 throughout the innings. The phrase ‘captain’s innings’ could be used to accurately describe Bragg’s knock, as he survived several confident appeals from the Pakistan bowlers in order to halt the flow of early wickets. Pakistan bowled with impressive pace and consistency, with the wickets shared amongst the players, never allowing the batsmen to maintain the required run-rate. Despite being bowled all out for 204, many Glamorgan fans would acknowledge that the majority of Glamorgan’s first team players were missing due to the T20 Blast game the previous evening, and be reassured by the upcoming talent in Glamorgan’s ranks.

The day proved a great success, due to the dedicated efforts of Newport’s volunteers, which were praised by Glamorgan’s Chief Executive Hugh Morris and Head Coach Robert Croft. The undeniable attraction of Newport CC was enjoyed by all, so fingers crossed that we will not have to wait another 25 years for another first-class return to Spytty!