

Limerick were 5 wicket victors against Clare in their Division 3 League match in Shannon on Saturday.

Having won the toss, Clare surprisingly elected to bat first on a bowling friendly wicket. They were soon struggling, with none of the top three managing to make double figures. Opener Jeremy Mace was first to go for 6 when he was caught behind by David Lynch off the bowling of Suman Sesham. Mace was deceived by the slow looping bounce that would cause problems for all the batsmen during the match. Conor Mullen, who joined Dharminder Singh, was next to go when he was tempted by a wide leg cutter and also was caught behind by Lynch for 2. Singh was next to go for 9. Looking to push the score along with Rajan, he walked across his stumps and was lbw to Bharath. Rajan at this stage was starting to look dangerous, on a wicket where it was difficult to decide what would be a good score to defend. His next two partners both went cheaply to excellent catches by Ryan Harris at square leg, from the bowling of Sreedhar. The first to go was Rajan when on 3 he top edged a pull and Harris got around taking a skyer of a catch at forty five.

Prince, who was next to go, must have felt unlucky when he got out a long hop from Sreedhar. Prince, new to the wicket, could only pull it straight to Harris who took a sharp catch above his head. It was not until Rafiqul Alam came to the wicket that Rajan was given support. Alam, having been fortunate to be dropped at gully off his first ball, clearly decided to go after the bowling. He scored a quick 17 and was looking dangerous, before he was out to a stunning catch by Limerick captain Kevin Hennessy, once again from the bowling of Sreedhar. Hennessy fielding at long on never looked to have a chance of stopping a ball that was going for six until he jumped and took the ball one handed. This was the lift that Limerick needed, when it looked that Clare were going to set a significant target. Rajan went next for a well played 25, stumped by Lynch off the bowling of Niranjana. Niranjana, who had struggled with his length, always caused problems to Rajan by getting a lot of turn off the slow paced wicket. When Rajan charged down the wicket and missed the ball it left an easy stumping and Limerick had wrestled back the initiative. Although Bernard Mullen managed a respectable 12, it was at a slower pace than the previous two batsmen. When attempting a big shot he was caught at long on. This time it was Suman that made the catch look easy off the bowling of Hennessy.

Hennessy bowled Paul Foley for 5 for his second wicket and that brought Shane Legge to the wicket. Limerick somehow contrived not to run out Legge, when a mix up left both batsmen halfway down the wicket. With the fielder only needing to take the ball cleanly and remove the bails, he threw the ball and missed. Luckily for Limerick, Legge tried to play hit and run the first ball of the next over and was run out comfortably by Aidan Fahey. With the ball having been hit straight to him at mid on, he had time to walk across and run out the batsman himself. That meant that Clare were all out in the last over of the innings for 97. Limerick's bowlers bowled very economically and even more importantly reduced the number of wides from over 40 the previous week to 4. Sreedhar added to his tally of 4 wickets against Waterford with 3 for 22 from 8 overs. Suman and Hennessy both bagged a couple of wickets with the latter taking 2 for 10 from 3.1 and the former taking 2 for 15 from 8 overs. Bharath with 1 for 12 from 8 overs and Niranjana 1 for 13 from 4 also shared the spoils. Satish, who opened the bowling and built the early pressure with Suman, was

left wicketless with 0 for 14 from 8 economical overs. This left Limerick needing slightly less than 2.5 an over from their 40 overs.

With the weather warming up as the innings went on, the Limerick batsmen hoped that the bounce would flatten out and become quicker. They once again started positively with Bandam hitting an early 6 but runs were difficult to come by due to the difficulty in timing the ball off the wicket. Shane Burke started well and hit two boundaries in his 11 ball 10 before he was bowled by Rajan. There was not much that Burke could do when a ball kept low and Limerick were left 19 for 1.

Bandam was joined by Bharath and both looked under little pressure from the bowling. Even with Limerick comfortably ahead at the same stage of the Clare innings, Bharath was putting himself under pressure to push the score along. Having already walked across his stumps twice and failed to pull the ball to the leg side, he was out the third time bowled by Conor Mullen. This brought Lynch to the wicket. He like Bandam hit an early 6, before both batsmen realising the amount of time and difficulty of the wicket played workman like innings. With neither batsmen looking under pressure, a miss timed flick to the leg side by Bandam lobbed an easy catch to Peralhalean at mid wicket. Bandam's wicket showed the problems faced by batsmen when trying to force the ball especially off the legs. In fact, Lynch was lucky soon after, when he was almost out in a similar way only for the ball to fall short of mid wicket.

Suman, the new batsman, and Lynch slowed down the strike rate even further in an attempt to reduce the risk of losing out on full batting points. Although not the most exciting to watch, they brought Limerick to 74 before Suman was bowled by Alam for 12. With Niranjan going soon after for 3 with the score on 84, Clare were ruing not scoring another 30/40 runs. With only 13 runs needed Satish and Lynch took Limerick home with just over three overs to spare, with Lynch hitting a boundary to bring up the 100 for Limerick. This secured full batting points; with Limerick needing 100 to do so, having lost 5 wickets in their chase. Lynch's 29 not out, 2 catches and 1 stumping earned him the man of the match award. Other notable performances included Suman for his 12 not out and 2 for 15, Satish 4 not out and 0 for 14 and also Bharath 11 and 1 for 12. In general, the Limerick fielding was a real positive and has been improving with each match.

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