

Helensvale CC vs Barmy Army XI  
Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> November  
Catherine's Hession Oval, Helensvale, Queensland, Australia

Picture the scene, England have just lost shamefully to an Australian side, that to be honest were on the rack, just 48 hours earlier. You've been singing and drinking, drinking and singing, solidly for 4 days, cheering on the boys you've travelled halfway around the world to support. In this situation, what would be the best way to save face – take on the locals at their own game. Local ABC radio had interviewed Boots and Beefy – the respective captains – to preview the game, and agreed to do live crosses to the ground to get score updates throughout the afternoon.

The bus arrived at the notorious Palace Backpackers at 9 am sharp to collect those brave enough to defend England's honour against the local convicts. After another heavy night at Gilhooley's the bravest option may have been to get a lie in, but 40 intrepid souls arose early and filed onto the "Gold Coast Greyhound".

The clouds started to close in as the 'squad' left Brisbane, and there were even showers in the air as The Barmy Army progressed closer to the Gold Coast metropolis of Helensvale. As the bus pulled into the complex, the clouds broke and the local's instantly set the standard for the day when they announced that "the bar is open and your first drink is free!" What more could you ever want?

The ground was showing the effects of the drought, but the wicket looked well prepared and so it should, as the Helensvale groundsman has spent his last few winters working on some green patch in St. John's Wood.

Not before too long the captains walked to wicket and the ceremonial Bradman 20 cent piece was tossed into the air. The Barmy Army captain called "heads", but on a day touching 30 degrees, the Helensvale captain going against the new "Hussain cricketing dynamics" theory decided to have a bat instead.



The Barmy Army selected its best 11, from the 30 or so available, to take the field, and it wasn't long before one of the locals was "back in the sheds" being caught and bowled with the 8<sup>th</sup> legal delivery of the day from Andy Hall.

The media arrived at the ground in their droves. At one stage there were two TV crews on the field and when drinks were finally brought out onto the field (15 beers, fresh from the fridge) after 10 overs, the newspapers - local, national and international – raced onto the field to capture the moment for the rest of the world - especially as they were delivered by one of Helensvale sponsors' employees – the lovely Vicky. Drinks lasted close on half an hour as The Barmy Army were asked to continue from where they left off from the Gabba on Sunday evening for the cameras.

Helensvale just happened to be 89 for 3 at this stage, but the Barmy Army were rueing missed chances, most of which would have been taken in an Under 12's game. As it proved later on, the Channel 10 news took a fancy to these missed chances and decided to beam the pictures across the nation on their Sports Tonight program, drawing a parallel with their English counterparts (Vaughan and Hoggard).



This chance was dropped by the keeper!

A further drinks break followed all too soon for the visitors, although the flow of runs had dried up a little and Helensvale had progressed to 143 for 6 after 23 overs. Steve Doyle by this stage had taken a blinding catch at extra cover, dropped two others, downed two bottles of beer and done two TV interviews. Steve is now beginning to understand the pressures of International cricket, and how Nasser Hussain feels in the cricketing spotlight all the time.

Helensvale were still losing regular wickets, and when Beefy came in to bat late on, the ABC rang wanting live updates from the ground. The first ball he faced was dispatched to the boundary, but balls two and three were disrupted by Spencer Howson live on air and the Helensvale captain was stumped live on air, after swinging one-handed, Malcolm Marshall style halfway down the track. His left hand just happened to have the mobile phone in it next to his ear. Soon after Helensvale declared their innings at 285 for 11. Star performances from opener Mitch Rowing and Lord's groundsman Steve Jarvis were the highlights of the Helensvale innings.

The traditional Aussie barbie was lit and lunch was served. By this stage, another of the Helensvale sponsors' employees had arrived to help out behind the bar – the sensational Bambi.



Helensvale were proving perfect hosts to the tourists, but before anyone realised that we were actually at the ground for a cricket match, it was time for the Barmy Army to begin their mammoth run chase.

Jimmy Saville and John O'Donoghue opened the batting and after being dropped from the first ball of the innings, but being given out by the (in)appropriately dressed Bambi, acting as umpire, not too much after Jimmy was back in the pavilion – hows about that then!

Unfortunately for Helensvale, Hampshire's new recruit Max Shoveller came to the crease. After crucifying the pedestrian attack to all parts of the ground, Shoveller's quickfire 59 came to an end, when he was yorked by the left arm chinamen of Brett Burke. Everyone realised that Shoveller was seeing the ball well, but it wasn't until well after his innings did anyone realise that the boy hadn't been drinking due to medication he was taking!

Wickets came at frequent intervals until Greg Hemmett came to wicket in confident form. Hemmett managed to pick the middle ball out of the three he could see and managed to hang around for about 10 overs, but scoring at less than a run an over, dramatically hindered the Barmy Army's run-chase. When Mad Bazza, Boots and Cookey came to the crease it was basically too late to do anything about the result, with Helensvale running out winners by 26 runs.

Both teams left the field to a standing ovation from the fans that had partially filled the Helensvale ground and kept up the entertainment throughout the afternoon. By this stage the third of the Helensvale sponsors' employees had arrived – the exceptional Chloe - to help out with the after match celebrations. The barbie was again fired up to feed the hungry hoards, and the Helensvale bar fridge was again emptied for the third time in the day.

The revelry was halted only when the TV news came on. The reports from Channel 9 and 10 couldn't have been more contrasting in styles. All I will say is, Channel 10's report was typically Australian.



The drinking and singing, singing and drinking carried on long into the night, until the bus returned to pick up the travelling Barmy Army before anyone had to carry anyone out.

At the end of the day cricket was the winner, as everyone involved had their best day since Friday at the Gabba. "This was one of the best tour games the Barmy-Army have ever played" was one comment overheard in the clubhouse, which is a real credit to the Helensvale club for putting on great hospitality and entertainment throughout the day.

A follow-up fixture has been organised for 2006.