

## CoPS/EBS v. Melbourne Institute The 2010 Story

With CoPS/EBS winning the toss, batting first, and collapsing not long after, Peter B. Dixon strode out to the crease. Aziz, the CoPS/EBS middle-order anchor, had been watching helplessly from the other end as the procession of wickets continued. At 9/132 they knew, *this is it*. The Institute had held the shield for five long years in the manner they knew best, by not playing. For five years Dixon had been dreaming of this day, the chance to win back the coveted shield. Now, within one scorching hour, that dream had all but evaporated. But as the two met in the middle, it seemed, almost immediately that we were about to witness something extraordinary. Thirty minutes later the world of cricket had changed forever.

The innings had started off without much incident. After winning the toss CoPS/EBS made a solid start and looked comfortable at 0/28 after 6 overs having seen off the Institute's opening bowlers. Alex was dismissed for 17 just as he begun to cut loose and Akram made it to a well-deserved 25 soon after. Rob continued on in his role as top-order anchor, but Heinrich clearly had no such ideas as he was in and out before you could say 'collapse', having emulated Alex's feat of breaking his duck with a six. George and Mavro followed suit, both sent packing by the trigger finger of Rudi Koertzen's nemesis leaving CoPS/EBS reeling at 81/5 at the halfway drinks break. The spell of bowling produced by Dawkins during this period was of the highest quality as the Institute continued to pile on the pressure. Michael, Robbie and Glyn came and went soon after as they fell victim to some good bowling and catching from the Institute. Only Aziz had been able to weather the storm, and now only one more batsmen remained to join him. At no.11, Dixon came.

If the complete and utter unexpected brilliance of the Wittwer/Madden partnership witnessed on this very oval two years ago was magical, then this was Houdini and Copperfield all rolled into one. With Aziz already on 12, strategic batting to prevent him from reaching 25 before innings end was critical. Dixon, of course, had to first not get out, and then get some runs, fast. The batting collapse had come so sudden Dixon clearly did not have much time to prepare for his innings. An early quick single nearly saw Dixon doing an unwanted swan dive as a pad came loose at full tilt. Despite pads flapping and pants flailing, Dixon and Aziz set about building what will come to be known as simply *The Partnership*. Exposing the tail-end bowlers of the Institute, Dixon & Aziz put on a clinic. Expert judgment of singles and some fearsomely struck boundaries were combined with a healthy dose of well-left wide deliveries. Milking the sundries column has become a CoPS/EBS specialty, and during *The Partnership* this was never more needed. With *The Partnership* strategically rattling along at 8 runs per over, they arrived at the last over. This back from the dead effort had clearly confused the Institute, and their decision to give the unlimited ball final over to one of their weaker bowlers did not turn out well for them. In scintillating form, *The Partnership* ruthlessly took advantage of this opportunity and added 20 more. All told *The Partnership* added a ridiculous 60 runs in 6 overs, with Aziz

contributing 13, Dixon 23, and sundries 24. *The Partnership* was greeted with wild cheers from their teammates as they came off. Not even the nearby Asylum had seen anything like this, and stories about Aziz's perfect timing and Dixon's masterpiece were quickly spreading across town. *The Partnership* had instantly become part of cricket folklore.

The Institute knew they would have to bat well to chase down 192. Jensen and Black made a brilliant start to their innings with a 45 run opening partnership. With the sun beating down and the CoPS/EBS fielding effort clearly suffering in the heat, the cunning Wittwer was handed the ball. Sure enough, the guile of Wittwer's dibly doblers proved unplayable straight away as he struck with his very first ball to remove Black, a wonderful caught and bowled effort. Of course, it had to be, given some of the previous fielding efforts, Wittwer knew that if he wasn't going to catch it, no one else would! Van Zijl continued to play well for the Institute, negotiating some very short pitched bowling from Bohlmann along the way. At the halfway drinks break, the Institute had the exact same score as CoPS/EBS, but with only 1 wicket down. Of course, that meant they would require the same furious run rate with which CoPS/EBS had finished their innings off. After Jensen retired with a well played 28, another Jensen came in. Unfortunately, he did not last as long as he too was undone by Wittwer. The crucial wicket of Dawkins, the Institute's most experienced player, proved to be a major blow. Falling into the trap set by the even more experienced Madden, Dawkins' mistimed pull was plucked out of the air by the safe-as-houses Jerie. The Institute was facing an uphill battle from there as tight bowling sent the required run rate out of reach. Huong heaved and hoed his way to a retirement score of 28 as CoPS/EBS relied on their formidable runs tally rather than tight bowling and fielding in their wilting defence. As the final overs approached, Rachel tried her best to repeat the CoPS/EBS miracle fight back, but without much help from sundries, the task proved insurmountable. In the end the Institute fell 23 runs short.

Dawkins graciously conceded the shield to Dixon in the post-match festivities as medicinal quantities of drip-fed beer rehydrated the players.

Man of the Match: The Sir John Monash Distinguished Cricketer, Peter B. Dixon.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There was some debate as to whether he should tie with Aziz, who batted while 112 runs were added. Only one frontier now awaits Dixon: that of being involved in partnership that matches his age, as on this occasion, he fell a run or two short.