

For the third year in a row two of the powerhouses of the Bendigo & District Cricket Association over the past decade in the Bendigo United CC and Strathdale Maristians CC meet in the Grand Final.

With one win apiece this will again be a close affair. Strathdale Maristians have a particularly talented all round line up with adequate batting and bowling departments. The Suns have this seasons Cricketer of the Year in Cameron Taylor as one of their key players with both bat and ball. While youngsters Jono Davidson and Andrew Chalkley are key players at the top of the batting order. Linton Jacobs, Dom Taylor and Craig Howard are the experienced players in the batting order and have been in excellent touch in recent matches. Another part of the batting has been the depth in the tail. Ben De Araugo, Ryan Haythorpe Brayden Hocking and Jacob De Araugo have been handy contributors with the bat as well, which will keep the fielding side on its toes.

At the start of the season it was anticipated that with the loss of a lot of experienced players from their side the Redbacks would slide down the ladder, but they are a side who enjoy a good scrap and have shown that they have depth and it may not be as bad as originally thought. With one of their key players retuning from a temporary retirement Heath Behrens has started to run into some good form in the last couple of matches. Mark De Fede has shown he has great ability at the top of the batting order along with the experienced Wayne Fidler who will play a steadying roll. Youngster Harry Donegan if he can curb his youthful exuberance could be a key player in the middle order.

Two of the key players for the redbacks are allrounders Leigh McDermott and Nick Crawford. Leigh with a career best 6 wickets in the semi-final bowled excellent lines. Nick has not had his best season with the ball has still taken 17 wickets but has shown his best touch with the bat in several seasons. His patience will be a steadying influence on the middle order. Pat Naughtin and Byron Perrin have made some handy runs in the lower order. Whilst not noted for their batting Marcus Smalley and Miggy Podosky make up the tail.

The bowling attack of the redbacks whilst not that star studded is well versed on bowling the right lines each week. Miggy Podosky when he keeps the ball up hurries onto the batsmen and Marcus Smalleys outstanding display in the Grand Final of 2 years ago shows he is up to the mark. Leigh McDermott, Byron Perrin and spinners Nick Crawford and Pat Naughtin gives the Redbacks a more than talented bowling line-up.

Both sides are very talented in all parts of the game. They bat, bowl and more importantly field well.

To select a winner in a Grand Final is always a difficult task. You can sit down and go over all of the players, look at form, look at statistics but on the day it is a freak catch or a brilliant run out or a player who is capable under the pressure of a Grand Final to stand up and make a difference in how his team performs. It is not always the best player. Last year Ben De Araugo with his magnificent innings that won the day, The year before it was Marcus Smalley with his 5 wicket haul that won the day.

I have a slight leaning towards Bendigo United because of the "Behrens" factor. He has always been a noted finals player with big scores being able to get BUCCs across the line and the rest of the batting forming partnerships around him. Once again perhaps the weather may prove to be another twist in the tail of the result with rain forecast later in the week which will make the toss more important.

Good luck to both teams and may the one who performs the best over the weekend come out on top

“ Dr. Gaz – Cricketologist”