

## **NZ Boys Development Team Daily Game Summaries**

### **Game One: NZ Development (Raw Sox) vs NSW Country.**

It was a proud moment for all Kiwi Supporters on a chilly Sydney overcast day as they heard an inspiring rendition of the HAKA lead by the Bays Horowai Puketapu on Diamond one at Blacktown's Olympic sports venue.

Inning by inning this young Raw Sox side showed their true potential by dominating their opponent's, scoring runs each inning through great batting from Gilbert, Love, O'Neil, Bennett and Puketapu with a huge over the fence home run and a sacrifice bunt.

Puketapu was also given the ball with Waikato's Gilbert behind the dish and this battery proved too strong for NSW country boys taking nine strikeouts, whilst only giving up four walks.

Final Score: 11-1 to NZ Raw Sox

### **Game Two: Raw Sox vs ISA NZ.**

After another inspiring HAKA rendition from the Raw Sox dressed in their away white New Zealand strip, the ISF New Zealand team showed their respect by not responding and giving their young Kiwi counterparts the opening exchange.

ISA's Coach Golland gave Jack Fletcher the ball who started very strong holding down the young Raw Sox but after five illegal pitchers he had to be replaced by Ben Watts, who proved to be equally effective.

Nth Harbours lefty Eruera Drage started on the mound for the Raw Sox but had a nervous start and put a pitch a little too close which saw the ISA team take an early lead with an automatic home run over the right field fence, but this was going to be the last time the ISA team would score in the game as the Drage and Hick "settled in" and showed what this young team truly represents to hold the ISAs very impressive batting line up at bay.

Backing up their battery, the Raw Sox weren't going to be intimidated by their elder country men, grinding out three runs over as many innings with an outstanding double by their youngest squad member Matakatea, singles to Bennett and Love with walks to Bearman, Drage and Hick who also proved to have a very impressive arm behind the dish to couple with their number six Bearman to get some outstanding pick offs at two with Bearman also snuffling out any threats through short.

Final Score: NZ Raw Sox won 3-1 vs ISA NZ

### **Game Three: NZ Raw Sox vs NSW Metro**

A sunny, but windy Sydney day with freezing cold winds greeted the boys and spectators alike.

Peter Jay Dando was given the ball for the first time during this campaign by Battery coach Mel England. This proved to be very successful as Dando held down the NSW team coupled with some great fielding by Hick, Matakatea and O'Neil. Peter Jay Dando pitched the first 3 innings and faced 12 batters for 6 strike outs, 2 walks, giving up two hits for no runs.

Ethan Johnston came on to the mound for the last inning of the game and faced 4 batters for 1 strike out, 1 walk and no runs. A disappointing fielding effort by the NSW team, saw the Raw Sox speedsters, Bearman, Bennett and Nau steal at will.

For the batting Taylor Nau hit two singles for 1 RBI, the other six hits in the game were from Bradley Bennett, Horowai Puketapu a two bagger, Horowai was also walked, Regan O'Neil a two bagger, Cameron Bearman two bagger for an RBI, Josh Kahukura also a two bagger with an RBI and the same for Tailah Love. The game ended in time after four innings.

Final Score: 9-0 to NZ Raw Sox

### **Game Four: Raw Sox vs Australia U19 Green.**

As the sun settled and Motel blankets became the fashion accessory for the Black Town stadium diehard supporters. The Australian under 19 Green side, who are using this tournament as a trial series to pick their under 19 Junior Men's side, must have underestimated the Kiwi pride of the Black fern.

After settling in, Canterbury's Ethan Johnston coupled well with lefty Khalid Gilbert behind the dish to cramp the big batting style of the Aussie side. Ethan faced 24 Batters over 5 innings for 4 strike outs, 2 walks giving up 2 earned runs from 6 hits.

Again as proven throughout this tournament, the Raw Sox batting line up came to the fore front with Harris, Gilbert, Kahukura, Hick and Harbours Nau showing fine form until a sliding accident into three saw Nau being taken from the field and being replaced with Bennett.

For the offense Vincent Harris and Josh Kahukura both hit a single, with Taylor Hick hitting two singles. The highlight of the game came from Khalid Gilbert who hit a single which brought in 2 runs and then a sac fly for a total of 3 RBI's.

So at the end of day two the NZ U16 Development boys are the only unbeaten side with four wins from four games which will see them into the top four play offs. Coaches David Reyland and Mel England were held speechless at the end of game four and for those that know Mel that takes some doing!

Final Score: 5-2 to the NZ Raw Sox

### **Game Five (Day 3): Raw Sox vs Australia U19 Gold.**

The weather continues to be cold, with the supporters wanting some trees to be quietly removed so the sun can break through and add some much needed warmth. It has been very interesting to see the slight variation on rules and girls teams wearing mouth guards adding quite a bit of humour in the chants and calls!

This game proved to be quite a test for our young Boys Raw Sox team with the Australians appearing to be throwing their top pitcher at us after the Raw Sox beat their Under 19 Green team. Everything started well with Bearman hitting a safe single to split the first and second basemen then stealing to two, but he was to be left on base.

Counties Peter Jay Dando started on the mound for the Raw Sox and finished with 6 strikeouts but couldn't contain the Australians huge batting line up with the Raw Sox needing to change pitchers two more times giving Johnston then Drage the ball but this made little difference.

The rest of the game was a bit surreal with some calls going against us and some fielding errors not yet seen by our boys, it was definite signs of the boys having their first early game of the tournament so far.

With a lot of the boys struggling with this type of quality pitching, Harris, Hick and a huge stand up 3 bagger by Puketapu did shine against this type of pitching and didn't want to let this opportunity slip by, with great discipline shown in the box from O'Neil and Bearman who managed to grind out some great at bats and finish with some walks.

Some notable fielding in this game was Harbours Conor Peden, who appeared to be like a magnet, attracting 3 catches in the swirling wind at right field in one innings.

Final Score: 1-6 Loss

### **Game Six (Day 3): Raw Sox vs Australia U17**

This was the game our boys wanted, our test match. Another inspiring rendition of the Haka lead by Puketapu, saw one of the Australians cross the line only to be abruptly pulled back in line by one of the coaching staff.

This was to be the start of an intriguing battle going to and fro between these two teams and would test the character of this young Raw Sox side. Again Drage was given the ball with Hick calling behind the plate, backed up by some excellent fielding by Bennett, Bearman and Matakatea.

Our batting line up again started to fire with Hick, Bearman and Drage getting singles and Puketapu and Gilbert getting stand up doubles. Gilbert went on to hit a huge home run and also an in-the-park home run.

Bearman ground out the only walk for the day only to be annoyed with his biggest ever hit to get stopped half a metre down on the huge 3 metre high centre field fence ending in a stand up double, an instant home run on our fences back home.

Bennett finished his day with a nice sacrifice bunt, with the team only suffering two strike outs in this game, so a lot of ground outs, but also pleasing to see the boys moving the ball, a great sign for any developing side.

This win was very pleasing for our boys and supporters and shows some great signs of things to come, whatever happens from now on in as fatigue, injuries, grazes and burns rattle their tired bodies, we can be all very proud of our young charges representing our game and families back home.

Final Score: 6-3 Win

#### **Day 4: Game 7: Raw Sox vs Western Civil**

A poor start put the boys behind and playing catch up proved too hard until the 5th innings where a pitcher change by Western gave the boys a look in and 3 runs. Western coach was quick to see the danger and another pitching change was quickly made.

Top batter was Cam Bearman with 2 hits and a hit pitch. Horowai Puketapu smashed an auto and Taylor Hick chimed in with a single.

Horowai had the ball for the first 2 innings facing 14 batter for 6 hits and 6 runs. Ethan Johnston faced 8 batters in 2 innings for 3 hits and Eru Drage also pitched 2 innings facing 9 batters for 3 hits and 1 run.

Final score: Western Civil won the game 7-3

#### **Day 4: Game 8: Raw Sox vs Australia U19 Gold**

This was a sudden death match with the winner still having a chance to win the tournament and the loser playing for minor placings. It was against Australia U19 Gold, a team who had beaten us earlier in the round. After an awesome haka which was mocked by the Aussies with a poor parody the boys used the energy and the insult to dominate and win 4-1.

Top batter was Eru Drage with 2 hits from 2 at bats and a run. Regan O'Neil scored Cam Bearman with a Sac fly to center field. Eruera Drage took the mound for the game for NZ and faced 25 batters for 3 hits and 1 walk, a definite man of the match performance.

Final score: Raw Sox win 4-1

Our next game is the semi final against Western Civil at 9.30 Oz time. If we win that the final will be against Australia Green at 11.30 Oz time.