

'B'ombers Just Makes It Home From Pioneer Territory - United Condo Squash Club, Singapore

Written by Michael C.S. TAN

Friday, 08 April 2011 18:31 - Last Updated Monday, 08 August 2011 14:10

It was never going to be easy flying into New Pioneers territory at CCAB, Evans Road and hoping to do damage. The 'terrain' was unfavourable and New Pioneers' defences were on full alert.

B-17 (*plane model, not his age*) Flying Fortress 'B'omber, Daryle Teng (DT), went on first against Pioneers veteran, Tan Kok Kiang (TKK), to do battle for *old-timers'*

sake. It was a slow, methodical process with rallies lasting up to 3 strokes on average. The scoring was fast, but not so the play. However, the first set had its moments of excitement when our own B-17 DT, despite lack of practice, matched TKK point for point till 6-6 and then it looked all over when TKK surged ahead to game point at 10-6. Then suddenly, the legendary fight-back exploded from DT with 4 successive points through some fine touches for which he is renowned, to force deuce. However, that effort must have used up the remaining fossil fuel in DT's B-17 and TKK snatched the crucial 2 points needed to seal set #1 by a (*uh*

) 'breath-taking' (*uh*

both players panting heavily by then

) 12-10. The pattern of play continued unchanged through the next 2 sets (*uh*

you serve, I drop, you give up. You serve, I drop, you return, I give up

). TKK, about half a head taller than DT, just had that additional reach to put away shots and ran home (*uh*

well, not really

) 11-9, 11-8 in these 2 sets. New Pioneers 1 UCSC 0

The next match definitely deserved to be called "Match of the Day". Joshua Wong (JW) stepped up to battle the *never-say-die* Rupert Jakes (RJ), a gentleman and a sport. Rupert had only just heard that Joshua had recently beaten Wasseem Gul of SAFRA in an A match and was perhaps a bit tentative in the first set, going down rather tamely at 4-11 to Joshua's incisive drives and cross-courts. RJ appeared to have settled down in the 2nd and started to make a strong fight-back with some really breath-taking (*uh* *real, this time*) retrievals, only to narrowly go down by 9-11. There was no mistaking RJ's steely determination in the 3rd set. The set was filled with long rallies and wonderful retrievals by both players and RJ was clearly beginning to dictate terms as JW occasionally lapsed into casual boasts which kissed the top of the tin. Those that did clear the tin, were tucked away into the back corners by a purposeful RJ. The result? A stunning and deserving comeback in the 3rd set by RJ, winning 11-6. As they say, "The fight is on!" And what a fight! JW looked to have regained his composure, reeling off 3 quick successive points to lead 3-0 in the 4th set, then 4-1 before RJ demonstrated yet again, the irrepressible fighting spirit which had allowed him to comeback in the 3rd. Following long rallies and excellent athleticism by both squashers, RJ hit a fine patch to surge past JW to lead 7-6. JW, determined not to let this one go into a rubber,

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fought back with his hard drives and cross-courts to wrest back the initiative at 9-7. But as the small group of spectators have come to appreciate, RJ was not done yet. It was then RJ's turn to pick up some fine winners to edge nearer home at 10-9 game-point and it looked like a rubber..... Certainly? Not so. JW levelled to force deuce at 10-10, then when facing a 2nd game-point at 10-11, levelled again at 11-11 before thankfully wrapping up the tie 13-11. Thank you both, for living and breathing squash! New Pioneers 1 UCSC 1 (
but one set behind
)

Captain Jon Cheu (JC) was up next and he was expected to deliver a crucial point in his battle with Patrick Mills (PM). It looked pretty much another day at the office when he thumped winners at will to stroll to a 11-2 win in the opening set. The New Pioneers player became livelier during the next 2 sets, keeping pace early on in both sets and even leading 5-3 at one stage in the 2nd. But Captain JC was never seriously tested and revving up a tad, allowed PM only one more point before taking set #2 by 11-6. The same pattern ensued in the 3rd only until 3-4. Captain JC then spirited away 5 consecutive points on the trot to lead 9-3 before a good but short spell allowed PM to notch up 3 more points before JC wrapped up proceedings by a similar 11-6. New Pioneers 1 UCSC 2

By this time, the yong-tau-foo lunch at noon had all but dissipated in Michael Tan's growling tummy and it was a hungry old 'B'omber who took to the courts for the final tie of the evening against his perennial Pioneers rival, Tan Wern Sern (TWS). It was as always, a very friendly encounter between the two. Winning and losing points were almost always greeted with laughter and funny remarks from both. It was almost a social outing. That suited the older man (
me, lah

) just fine as he laughed his way to the 1st set, winning by 11-6 with some neat tuck-aways and assisted by uncharacteristic mis-hits by TWS. It was to be no laughing matter from the 2nd set onwards although the atmosphere remained friendly. TWS began to find his range and being more familiar with the home court, was able to put away some innocuous-looking cross courts to good effect which Michael had trouble turning to counter, not being able to find traction on an increasingly slippery court. One other clear strategy which TWS had been using to excellent effect.... He serves teasingly loose shots in tempting Michael to go for winners. These paid dividends as the older player was out of sorts at those moment and put away some horrific and cheap points into the tin or played so loosely for a lunging TWS to push back into the corners. 2nd set 11-5, 3rd set 11-7. At least the trend was improving from 5 to 7! the 4th set saw Michael trying to make a fight of it but it was not to be his night and despite a late fightback to 8-10, he had to surrender 8-11 finally to graciously concede 1-3 to the always sporting Wern Sern.

So it was 2 ties and 7 sets all and down to counting points to determine the winner of the match. Furiously engaging fingers, then mobile phone calculators (*toes would also have been included*

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had shoes been removed, but thankfully weren't
) and the tally was 112 New Pioneers 140 UCSC.

UCSC won on the countback! But the next day (*this morning*), a quick recheck by Michael found that the scores had been wrongly accorded and NP had 10 points more than at first thought, and UCSC had 8 points less. It was panic for a moment before UCSC breathed a ssigh of relief that the corrections still weren't enough for NP to sneak home.

NP 122 points UCSC 132 points.

UCSC (*gratefully*) Lives & Breathes Squash!

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