

[b]Team Colorado at Unity Cup 2015[/b]

[b]Team[/b]: Bodhayan Chakraborty (LCC) (Captain), Satyam Singh (CCB) (Vice-Captain), Manjeet Inamdar (CCB) (Wicket-Keeper) , Faiq Majeed (FCCC), Sandeep Bollampally (CCCC), Dhiren Patel (LCC), Rohit Saini (FRCC), Shashank Godbole (FRCC), Ajay Sharma (LCC), Benjamin George (CCB), Jimmi Skaria (BCC) and Bhavya Khilnani (LCC).

[b]Venue[/b]: Chicago- Washington Park (4 pitches which held simultaneous matches) and Hanover Park

[b]Date[/b]: Labor Day Weekend, Sept 4-7 (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/unitycup20/>)

[b]Tournament Format[/b]: 14 teams in 3 groups play 3 league matches followed by QF, SF and then the Finals. The Winners get \$10,000, Runner-up gets \$5,000 and the losing semi-finalists get \$2,500 each. 4-piece white cricket balls were used with colored player clothing and the matches were played on jute mats over concrete as well as astro-turf matting like the ones we have here in Colorado.

[b]Team Colorado Result[/b]: Defying huge odds and shaking off the odd disparaging comment about CCL cricket quality from other teams, Team Colorado entered the **[b]semi-finals[/b] where they were beaten by one of the tournament favorites by 4 wickets to win **[b]\$2,500[/b]** in prize money. Kings XI, a Chicago based team eventually won the tournament. Team Colorado was probably the only team or maybe one of a couple or so to not have any paid players who had international and first-class cricket experience. Given the disparity of the top-level cricket experience between the pre-tournament favorites and us, Team Colorado surprised a number of teams and the organizers with our results and **[b]were invited back to the tournament next year[/b]**. Our performance here definitely helped spread the word that Team Colorado can compete with the other bigger leagues in the country. This was a great team effort which **[b]included Team Colorado players in the tournament leaderboards![/b]** You will notice a number of recognizable names in the lists below who have played first-class and international cricket around the world. They are all paid to play for their franchise teams and it was great to mix it up with these big guys on the field.**

[b]Batting[/b]: **[b]Sandeep[/b], **[b]Dhiren[/b]** and **[b]Bodhayan[/b]** ranked 3, 4 and 5 respectively:
[link=<http://cricclubs.com/CCUSA/battingRecords.do?league=2&clubId=29>] **Batting Ranking** **[/link]****

[b]Bowling[/b]: **[b]Ajay[/b] and **[b]Rohit[/b]** ranked 4 and 5 respectively:
[link=<http://cricclubs.com/CCUSA/bowlingRecords.do?league=2&clubId=29>] **Bowling Ranking** **[/link]****

[b]Player Ranking[/b]: **[b]Dhiren[/b] ranked 3:
[link=<http://cricclubs.com/CCUSA/playerRankings.do?league=2&clubId=29>] **Player Ranking** **[/link]****

The team spirit was top-class. As it was the T20 format not all the players got a lot of opportunity to display their skills but the effort was always put in to field and catch well.

[b]Pictures[/b]:



Post-tournament celebrations for Chicago deep-dish pizza



Team Colorado



Following the downpour on the first morning



Between matches



Bodha and Rizwan Cheema (ex-Canada national team Captain and Captain of Chicago Gymkhana) interviewed by the organizer

[b]Bodha's interview with the organizers[/b]:

[link=<https://www.facebook.com/mohammed.iftikhar.3/videos/10153067685291570/>**]**Facebook Video**[/link]**

[b]Tournament Planning[/b]: The 12-man team was picked after a couple of practice sessions and announcements made to the Team Colorado and CCL-LMC Yahoo groups. There were around 17 CCL players in contention. Once the team was announced, hotel rooms, rental cars and flight tickets were booked as well as the \$2,000 tournament entry fee. Team players chipped in make the initial payments and thanks to CCL for providing \$1,000 towards these expenses. Since we did not have sponsors for the team, the players shared all the other expenses as well and shared the prize money amongst themselves. All things considered, this was all fully worth it and funded a great learning experience for CCL. Special thanks to **Jimmi for procuring hotel rooms at a discounted rate.**

[b]Match Reports[/b]:

[b]League Match #1: Team Colorado vs Kings XI (eventual champions) at Washington Park on Saturday[/b]

[link=<http://cricclubs.com/CCUSA/viewScorecard.do?matchId=20&clubId=29>**]**Scorecard**[/link]**

Heavy torrential rain for over an hour in the morning delayed play for a couple of hours reducing the mornings matches to 6 overs-a-side and the afternoon matches to 12 overs-a-side. It was amazing to get any play that day given the amount of rain but the drainage of the grounds was impressive which allowed the matches to continue. The pitch was a jute mat over concrete which was damp when play started. Bodha won the toss and elected to bowl first. The bowlers did pretty well to keep Kings XI to 64 runs in their 6 overs. Satyam was the pick of the bowlers where he gave 16 runs off his two overs and this would have been even less was it not for a six hit off the last ball of the innings. Given the Colorado's batting line-up, we like our chances at the innings break and Dhiren duly delivered the first ball of the chase smashing a huge six over covers and mind you the boundaries for this tournament were all over 75 yards. Unfortunately, the Colorado batsmen did not apply themselves in general and lost wickets trying to attack before they were set and collapsed to 37/8 in their 6 overs. Sandeep top-scored for the team with 20 runs.

[b]League Match #2: Team Colorado vs Unity XI at Washington Park on Saturday[/b]

[link=<http://cricclubs.com/CCUSA/viewScorecard.do?matchId=24&clubId=29>**Scorecard[/link]**

The team did their best to put the disappointment of the mornings match behind them knowing that they had to clear their minds and execute better the next 2 matches in order to win by big margins for the NRR.

Bodha won the toss again and chose to bat this time. This is when the Team Colorado batting unleashed itself in Chicago. Dhiren (35 runs in 18 balls) and Manjeet (20 runs) gave the team a great start putting on 39 runs in just 3.3 overs for the opening wicket. Sandeep (43 runs in 27 balls) and Bodha (27 runs in 8 balls!!) then took over and hit 4 sixes each to take the team score to an imposing 132/4 in their 12 overs. In their reply, Unity XI were never in the hunt as they were reduced to 58/9 in their 12 overs. This was just the result that the team needed to help their NRR. All of the Colorado bowlers bowled brilliantly led by Rohit (3/9) and Dhiren (1/17) who bamboozled the batmen with their swing even with this 4-piece ball. Ajay (2/8) and Bhavya (2/13) then spun webs around the opposition batsmen. The highlight of the match was possibly Rohit's one-handed catch over his head on the boundary at deep mid-wicket off Ajay's bowling.

[b]League Match #3: Team Colorado vs FCC Gladiators at Washington Park on Sunday[/b]

[link=<http://cricclubs.com/CCUSA/viewScorecard.do?matchId=37&clubId=29>**Scorecard[/link]**

New day, same story for the Team Colorado batsmen- the juggernaut rolled on. Bodha registered his hatrick of toss wins and rolled the red carpet for the batsmen. The top 4 showed no mercy with 10 4s and 13 6s hit in the allotted 20 overs. Dhiren (39 runs off 22 balls), Manjeet (47 runs off 30 balls), Sandeep (39 runs off 27 balls) and Bodha (80* runs off 38 balls) hammered the bowlers to allow the

team to reach 218/4. The FCC bowlers would look like they had been through a hurricane as they walked off the field!

If the FCC bowlers were left dazed and confused following The Bodha Show, their batsmen soon joined them in scratching their heads. Dhiren opened the innings with a HATTRICK. 3 wickets in 3 balls. After 0.3 overs bowled, batsmen 7 and 8 were scrambling for pads and gloves outside the boundary in order to be ready to go in next next. That was a hilarious sight. They complained that they had never seen the ball swing so much. To repeat- this was a 4-piece ball. Rohit continued the onslaught taking 2 wickets with his in-swingers. Not to be left out-done by the pacers, Bhavya took 3 wickets off his 3 overs and Ajay bowled 4 overs to allow just 11 runs to be scored off them and took one wicket. Team Colorado won the match by 135 runs and sealed their place in the quarter-finals as the 3rd seed thanks to their, by now, absurd NRR.

[b]Quarter Finals: Team Colorado vs Ohio All-Stars at Washington Park on Sunday[/b]

[link=<http://cricclubs.com/CCUSA/viewScorecard.do?matchId=38&clubId=29>]Scorecard[/link]

This match was played immediately after the previous one and this is where the competition stepped up a couple of levels. The players were all in shape, the pacers bowled fast and the batsmen hit the ball a country mile. And yes, they are a franchise team.

Ohio won the toss and let the Team Colorado batsmen do their thing. Did they not see our previous match scorecards? Anyway, Dhiren found his form with the bat in the money-part of the tournament to blitz 71 runs with four 4s and an equal number of 6s. Manjeet was not to be left behind as he scored 37 runs in quick time. Their opening stand set the stage for Sandeep and Bodha. Sandeep took the spinners to the cleaners hitting five 6s in his 43 run knock while Bodha plundered 47 runs in just 18 balls to also hit five 6s. The highlight of the innings undoubtedly was his four consecutive 6s in an over bowled by Ohio's main fast bowler- after his previous over he started mouthing-off at Bodha asking him why he wasn't able to hit him for boundaries. The poor, young man. He ended the over going from a 30 pace run-up to a spinner's one. At the innings break, Team Colorado felt confident of defending 224 in 18 overs given their bowlers being in form but we knew the opposition were capable of match us.

Faiq kept wickets this match as the 75% humidity took its toll on a few players including the starting wicket-keeper, Manjeet. Ohio came out all guns blazing but once Ajay removed one of the openers who was playing well, Colorado felt a little comfortable with Ohio reduced to 69/5 in 7 overs. As the evening sun set and darkness descended, two Ohio players gave Colorado the scare of their trip blasting 6s and 4s at will. Both scored 50s at strike rates of over 200 and the win was in doubts for a few overs. Ultimately the bowlers kept their cool to record a slim 27 run victory in near darkness. Rohit was the pick of the Colorado bowlers scalping 3 wickets at just 7 runs/over. Colorado celebrated. The players were exhausted with the heat and humidity but this was an accomplishment to celebrate. Amazing desi food was had at Devon street and downtown Chicago the following 2 nights.

[b]Semi Finals: Team Colorado vs Chicago Gymkhana at Hanover Park on Monday[/b]

[link=<http://cricclubs.com/CCUSA/listMatches.do?league=2&clubId=29>**Scorecard[/link]**

If the Ohio team was good, this Chicago one was a couple of levels above, talent-wise. All of their players had first-class and international cricket experience. They all have Cricinfo player profiles and paid just to play. We were in the semis when no one in Chicago gave us a chance. We had \$2,500 in the kitty and knew who we were up against. At this point we just wanted to enjoy the experience while we gave it our all.

Bodha won the toss once again and chose to bat. The pace bowlers were the fastest we've ever played against- a couple of them possibly hitting 140 KMPH. The wicket-keeper stood almost on the 30yard circle for them. But we started well. After 12 overs, Team Colorado was 86/2. But then, wickets soon fell and their bowlers tightened the screws. Sandeep top-scored with 49 runs that included 4 6s, 2 hits on the helmet and 2 bruises on his arm and thigh. The bowling was good but the Colorado batsmen hung in there to put up a challenging total of 118.

The Colorado bowlers bowled valiantly to take 6 wickets in the defense of their score. At 82/6 the team smelled an opportunity but a 37 run stand for the 7th wicket took the Chicago Gymkhana team to the Finals. Ajay bowled the best to finish with figures of 4 for 14 in his 4 overs. The team bowled and fielded well but in the end, the best team won. Only just.

The team took advantage of the free rest of the day to do some sight-seeing of Chicago and close out their great tournament performance.

[b]Takeaway [/b]:

Team Colorado can compete outside of the state and should do so more often. It might be expensive to participate in more than two tournaments per year if the expenses have to be undertaken by the players always but seeing how other teams are sponsored outside CCL, it is possible and must be pursued.