

## Perhaps, possibly, maybe. Probably!

Is there a quiet revolution occurring in Central Europe? Perhaps, possibly, maybe.

Austria, Czech Republic and Luxembourg recently competed in the T20 Central Europe Cup held in Prague. Austria, the favourites, ranked 38 in the ICC T20 world rankings won three out of four games held over a long weekend in May and emerged victors. Luxembourg, rank 62, were the surprise packet, won two out of four, and finished second. Czech, rank 60, beat Lux on the Friday which was their sole success. Malta cancelled due to Covid.

"Wonderful tournament" was the verdict of former Malahide CC seamer Atif Kamal who featured strongly in the Lux attack. Atif won Man of the Match in Lux's victory over Czech Republic with figures of 3 for 23 in 4 overs. In the second game against Austria, Luxembourg successfully chased 179/5 in 19.4 overs winning by 5 wickets.

"Our victory over Austria is probably the most important result for Luxembourg cricket in the modern era. Austria are ranked more than 20 places above us in the T20 world so it was a huge result for us. And we also beat the Czechs on their home ground which was another big day."



2021 Luxembourg National Squad – Atif Kamal 1<sup>st</sup> Left back row

What does it mean for Lux cricket? "Confidence and momentum. Also, it will help attracting more fixtures against stronger teams." The cricketing graph in Luxembourg is going up.

Why "wonderful"? The Central Europe Cup has been running for seven years but this is the first year it has full ICC T20I accreditation. Thus official umpires for all games, strong organisation, exemplary Covid-19 bio-secure arrangements, good pitch and funding from ICC and Lux federations. Also all players and officials were required to download and comply with the Sports Integrity App re match fixing, drug taking etc. The whole shebang! And the competition was streamed live on the Czech cricket You Tube channel.

The Luxembourg national cricket team currently play T20 only. The domestic league has been reduced from 25 overs to T20. Thus, the main focus now is on the reduced format with the inevitability of increased skill level. Lux are well led by Dutchman Joost Mees with a mix of ex patriot nationalities including Indian, Pakistan, English and Kiwis/Australian. But the strong indicator is that at least four of the current squad came up through the ranks in domestic Lux cricket and more locals are taking to the game.

Unfortunately, the T20 2022 World Cup Euro Regional Qualifiers to be held in Finland have been cancelled due to the Pandemic. However, Luxembourg are hopeful of more fixtures particularly after the strong showing in Prague.

Do the stronger European nations such as Ireland, Netherlands and Scotland need to keep an eye on what is going on in Central Europe. Probably!

Brian Gilmore 2021