

Thame 3s vs BRCC 2s

21st July 2018

Ridge average IQ goes up by 15 points as OEUG returns

Extra spell in classroom does little for Hairbear's continuing education

News of Taggart's debut as an opener gives Rolfie fresh heart

BRCC 2s 177-5 (45 ovs)

Thame 3s 178-4 (31.4 ovs)

Lost by 6 wickets

It takes a fair amount of research and intelligence just to get to Thame 3s' ground. On the website it says Lord William's School, and whilst that is technically where you are playing, the procedure for getting there is that you drive into the school's visitors' car park, ring your skipper and ask how the hell you get to the cricket pitch. He then tells you that "everyone did that" and you need to park in the leisure centre next door and walk yet further away from the school. Upon mentioning this to one of the Thame players when I eventually arrived, he said, "Yeah, everyone does that".

Is it me?

A good job then that we had upped the intelligence quotient of the team this week by including the cricketer formerly known as OEUG (Oxford English Under Graduate). I say formerly because since his last game, he has graduated with about 8 degrees in any and every subject involving Law or the English Language and so should now be known as OGIMD (Oxford Graduate In Multiple Disciplines).

Having been a student for the last 15 years, OGIMD felt particularly at home in the "changing room" which bore a striking resemblance to a classroom. Suitably inspired, Shaun, currently known as ALGPR (A level graduand, pending results), decided that an intellectual warm up would be in order and used the magic marker board to challenge Hairbear to a game of BRCC hangman.

Shaun: 8 letters, clue, in this room

Hairbear: Z

Shaun: Nope

Hairbear: X

Shaun: Nope

Hairbear: J

Shaun: Nope

Taggart: Try a vowel you muppet (in a nurturing and encouraging tone)

Hairbear: Oh yeah! S

Shaun laughs, Taggart despairs and OGIMD makes note to take another degree next week in teaching rurally educated cricketers the alphabet.

Move on a few of the longest minutes of everyone's life. Board now reads HA_RB_AR

Hairbear: Is it Haurblar?

Tags starts trying to swallow his Deep Heat in an attempt to overdose, Jovan cracks 2 ribs laughing and OGIMD makes a note to make it a joint honours in helping rurally educated cricketers remember their names.

At this point Sniff walks in with a teacherly swagger, ends the frivolity by putting Jov in detention and announces that he lost the toss and we're batting, but it's OK because it's an absolute road and he was going to bat anyway. Chesh and Tags to open. At this point Jov needs oxygen to be resuscitated.

It was only 2 stops on the train from the changing room to the pitch and when we got there we went out to examine the aforementioned "road". I have seen roads that looked like this, but only after a brigade of heavy artillery have gone down them, realised they had forgotten to turn the oven off, reversed back up it and then gone down again. There were some even parts where the weeds had been killed by the caterpillar tracks and nothing had grown back, which was better than the outfield which was sporting some particularly nasty rather tall stinging weeds. The fetching blue string boundary 'rope' would have nicely set off the bright white sight screens, if there had been any and there was a man from the Tour de France measuring the slope across the wicket to see if it was too steep to include as a 1st category climb in next year's edition.

Thame's opening bowlers were also magicians. They were both able to bowl 3 variations off the same length with no discernible change of action. There was the one that came through, the one that rolled along the ground and the one that went vertical.

Chesh gloved one behind, Jov decided to take the vagaries of the wicket out of the equation by planting both pads in front of the stumps and letting the ball hit them, and Tags, having batted for 10 overs for 3 at a pace that would have had Rolfie tutting about slow scoring, got a full length ball that reared and clipped the top glove.

Fahan tried to dig in but was bowled by a ball that only just pitched on the strip and after being joined by OGIMD, Haurblar came off blaming the pitch for a ball that had hit halfway up the stump ... on the full.

OGIMD had worn a few, but had also found the boundary a couple of times and was joined by Shaun. The heat was starting to take its toll on the fielders and wasn't helped by the extra gallons of hot air that were coming out of the keeper's mouth, and the ball was softening a little, but 39-5 never looked like it was going to become a game extending total.

They soldiered on however and gradually began to exert some control. At the second drinks break (30 overs) OGIMD had got to 41 and Shaun to 38 and the score was just over 100. Taggart, who was now umpiring and was unusually grumpy, started to count off the batsmen's runs as they approached 50. OGIMD got there in good time and carried on pushing the rate along. Shaun however became somewhat becalmed and whilst umpiring the 43rd, Tags let slip to OGIMD that he reckoned that Shaun was on 45 and at the current rate could get to 50 if he batted until Tuesday. OGIMD then tried to farm the strike in reverse, but each time he pushed for a single the ball rather inconveniently went for 4. With 2 balls left however, Shaun finally got one away for the 2 he needed at that point to take him to 51, and then just to emphasise how easy it was to bat, plinked the last ball over mid-wicket for 6.

177 for 5 hadn't exactly put them out of the game, but 138 run partnerships don't come along every week in the 2s, so we booked passage on the Queen Mary to get back to the changing rooms for tea in good spirits.

A goodly number of top order batsmen in the Cherwell League will tell you that the Tiflex ball on a less than good pitch, particularly a dry one, is a bit of a hand grenade for about 15 overs. To take advantage of this as a bowler however, you need to a) use the pitch, and b) put it in roughly the right place. This we have not managed in too many games and despite some decent bowling, a flying catch from Sniff and a body flexing feline catch from Chesh, we shipped far too many runs early on and after 12 overs, Thame had muscled their way very close to 100 for 2. Dales calmed things down a bit from one end, Chesh revved them up again from the other and Huerbier settled into a decent spell after a some wayward early stuff.

Mark Neal has been a trouper this season, always cheerful, always willing, but usually batting low and not bowling very often, so as a last throw of the dice, Sniff threw him the ball. Thame needed about 20 to win, had 15 overs to get them and 8 wickets left, so you could argue that it wasn't much of a kindness. His first over went for a few, but first ball of his second was a half volley on leg stump, which Ian Chappell, who had played well for his 49, chipped agreeably to Mark's best mate at mid-wicket. As the batsmen had crossed, it was Justin Avery on 80* that faced the next ball, which he chipped agreeably to Mark's best mate at mid-wicket. Surely not! Everyone in for the hat trick ball, apart from David Saint, who was told to stay exactly where he was. And the next ball A rank long hop which the new batsman smashed rather disagreeably over mid-wicket for 4, as he did with the next. Game over.

The frustration for Sniff as skipper would be that he had 3 bowlers in his team who would have been salivating at the prospect of bowling on that wicket, but weren't fit enough to turn their arms over. Nevertheless, there has been considerable progress in the approach and attitude in the 2s over the last few weeks, and we no longer look like a team that you can walk all over. With availability looking increasingly good over the next couple of weeks, there's still a couple of results left in this team.