

## RIDGE LOSE THRILLER IN LOCAL DERBY

### BenDog in Investment Rejection Shock-Horror

Bledlow Ridge : 213-7      53 ov  
Bledlow Village 215-9      46.5 ov

Lost by 1 wicket

Tense, pulsating, nerve-jangling, emotional agonising: all of these. A match that the Village were winning for longer periods than the Ridge, nevertheless went this way and that until the last over, six to win, one wicket left and a catching opportunity went begging.

After Phil Brooks' brisk 20 and RolfeDog's 4, the Ridge fought slowly against tight bowling and athletic fielding building the score very gradually to 100-6 with only about 13 overs left. Everyone got a start: Russ fought for 19, Gorgeous made 15 including a six, Conor got into the 30s and holed out but we were behind the pace. Phil and RolfeDog met TombsDog on a walk around the ground, and there was some grumbling about the scoring rate.

Suddenly Jack Brooks injected some pace with a rapid 20-odd as BirdDog did what he does best at the other end, a run-a-ball 35-odd not out, working the ball into the spaces rotating the strike, keeping it going.

When Jack was out for more runs than his dad, he received a telling off by his Dad (the Babbling Brooke?). Phil and Jack are about to reach the age where son doesn't bother listening to dad any more: make the most of the last rites Phil.

Then Brez joined BirdDog with about seven overs to go. South Arica used to ensure their destroyer Klusener did not get into bat with more than seven or eight overs remaining. Easier just to pull the trigger that way. Brez at his best, played himself in for one ball and then committed assault. 64 in 26 balls: the two sixes were really nines. The fielder at mid-wicket did not even look into the garden behind him let alone attempt to go through the gate to pursue the ball after one of them.

Brez eventually worked a shot to leg and acknowledged his fifty before there was any applause. After all he had only been in for five minutes. The Village's fielding was ragged for the first time all afternoon and 213 was a fine score from where we had been. We were winning the game for the first time.

The Village tried to ruin our chances with exceptionally huge slices of chocolate cake at tea and seemed to have succeeded even though we took a quick wicket, as the Village progressed with Adam Mould in aggressive mode. But suddenly Dakes and Brez got a grip and Dakes passed the bat repeatedly, got one nick but the ball got away.

At 100-1 the Village were winning. "C'mon guys, 1 wicket brings 3" I cried. BenDog, half a mile away at long-leg who had been in solitary confinement all afternoon, came to life and questioned my mathematics. Remembering that the recent fund mislaid by an investment bank close to his heart has been found to be £5.5bn, not £2bn as first thought, I was able to revise the call to "C'mon guys, 2 brings 5.5" and BenDog returned to exile.

Then we took three wickets of which the most important was a quite brilliant left-handed low catch by Conor at cover to dismiss Mouldy off a full-blooded cut. Mouldy was the first to congratulate him at the next drinks break. Jack who fielded superbly all day pouched two, one a skier... but as he never looks like dropping one we didn't make a great fuss.

If only we could get Morf to reduce his Saturday commitment to flower-pressing classes we could get him Conor and Jack fielding in the same side and that would be more than impressive. And we would all learn a little more about flower-pressing.

Jack does need to practice short throws though, as one howitzer from about sixty yards cleared our wicket-keeper comfortably before cracking Russ hard on the knee. The damaged knee. Miraculously the crack was the sound of his steel protective knee equipment. Russ survived. Father Phil showed him how to do it with an important run-out, hitting one stump with an underarm throw from a dozen yards that did not even threaten Russ' knee.

More runs came and we spurned a couple of hard return catches and then came a two incidents both involving umpire intervention.

First Conor chased a ball to the boundary where a couple had been watching from their chairs all afternoon. The chairs were partly inside the boundary.

"We don't know who they are but they come most weeks" the Village People (!) said. They were on the far side and had been involved in a conversation with BenDog who, on discovering that they did indeed have the £20 million in readies necessary to invest as personal customers in a certain major bank, tried to win their custom... but they had heard the earlier call of "£2m brings £5.5m" and on learning this meant losses not gains, decided to leave their capital with the Bank of Sid, under the Oak Tree at Frenches Wood (see RolfeBlog).

Anyway, as Conor got nearer the ball he also got nearer a tangle of human legs and chair legs and rather than risk a legal claim had to concede the boundary and with it two runs. Would this be important?

The second drinks break followed almost immediately. The umpires sacrificed their orange squash to go and talk to this shrewd pair of investors who moved their chairs, picnic and wad of £50 notes outside the boundary. As we were about to resume, Brooksie, who had been on planet Zog for three minutes called out "Umps: do you think you could get that couple on the boundary to move?". It's amazing he finds his way home each night.

The second incident also involved Brooksie who could not quite hold a skier on the run. Was there a shout from the pavilion just before he reached the ball? Brez got rather emotional. He cares, he got emotional. Another umpire investigation resulted in Bledlow asking a tipsy supporter to make his way home and report back during the week when sober.

After these hoo-ha's we got a sixth wicket when BenDog came on: surely we were winning now weren't we? But James "Jabber" Shirley smashed it: yes smashed it. As one six sailed into the field Brez did at least call "Not as big as mine Jabber" presumably referring to the shot.

Another six and with 13 wanted from nearly 4 overs it was all over. Game, set and match. But this is cricket. Jabber who had apparently won the game went for a big one. The ball was in the air forever somewhere between BenDog and Brez; at the last minute Brez lurched and held a fine running catch. Geoff bowled the other batsmen soon after, then Brez returned for an over and bowled Kingy. With Andie (pretentious spelling or what?) Witney coming out we were winning now, surely?

Dakes prepared to bowl the last with six wanted. They sneaked a single and another plus an overthrow (grrrr!), then a dot ball... then it happened. The batsman thrust forward and pushed his shot into the air; an Old Fart took off, had the ball between his thumb and forefinger long enough to hear the shrieks of his teammates before hitting the ground and losing the ball and hearing the silence.

Aaaaaaargh!

The fifth ball sneaked between all the fielders and a magnificent match was over, virtually as close as it gets. The teams stayed together for a long time, Geoff trying to rescue victory over a game of darts and BirdDog talking a load of complete rubbish. Jabber produced a photo of a young man he claimed to have been himself before he took a liking to ice-cream – photo-shopped of course.

A fine and intense game. It may have been the wrong result but as BirdDog said, "We are having a great season".

Brooksie found his way home.