

MATCH REPORT: Bledlow Ridge CC 1s v Banbury 3s Away

Saturday 6th July 2013

BRCC 238-8 (53 overs)

Banbury 241-7 (47 overs)

Lost by 3 wickets.

The Ridge lost on the last ball of the match when, wanting two for victory, Banbury hit the last ball for four past the outstretched hand of Dakes .

It had begun so well with the Lions victory in its final stages as we prepared for the start of the match.

Not so easy to find a telly though. You see Banbury run five sides and have three grounds. I ran the Banbury 3s captain to find out where we would play in order to organise first half rugby viewing. He no longer played for Banbury he said but they would probably play at the old Banbury XX ground next to the motorway. So I called the 2nd X1 captain; he did not know for sure, thought the same but did comment that the alternative, Horton View was “some way across town”.

Then came a missive from Secretary McTaggart that Banbury’s website says that all 3rd and 4th X1 matches are played at Horton View. So I rang the Banbury Secretary, twice, no answer. Finally I got the Fixture Secretary - he’d know: “I am no longer Fixture Secretary” he said and didn’t know anyone who’d know although he did comment that the two grounds are “just five minutes away”... in direct contradiction to the other officer no longer in his post.

I gambled on the website being right and followed the website’s directions to the further venue at Horton’s View and although I got there alright the road names were mostly different to those given on the website.

I found a country pub with Sky. There was no TV signal to tell anyone where I was and eventually had to miss a Halfpenny penalty and walk down the centre of the street to get a signal and discover I had made the wrong choice and that the game was indeed next to the motorway a quarter of an hour's drive back.

After all that, there is a Holiday Inn with TV right next to Banbury XX's ground where I saw enough of the second half to know the Lions were just about there.

Thereafter my day peaked at the very start, when, on arriving in a hurry I trod on the sandalled toes of Geoff Tombsdog who let out a string of invective muttering among other things about his bad knee and that he was only there to make up the numbers anyway.

This was not the smartest remark and we had a few jokes at his expense and realised, what with him batting 11, not bowling and hardly able to field he had at last – to use the terminology used in the off-season about his cricket – found his “role in the team”.

Well enough about Geoff for now.

Dakes arrived with ten minutes to go, in a major huff about it taking two hours to get out of London. Middsy remarked that he had nevertheless arrived at his usual time of 12.55 so what's new? Dakes got changed in a panic only to discover we were batting anyway and somehow seemed even more annoyed.

Our 238 was our best of the season but it wasn't that easy. At least Brooksie (0) intersperses ducks with the occasional 50 but RolfeDog at 3 this time, can only intersperse ducks with, well, the occasional duck and when Middsy went and the score declined to about 110-4 things did not look good.

Out went Dakes after a good slumber, around the time RolfeDog was introducing an ex-Banbury XX player, now spectator, to Tombsdog who remembered him as a good player. What this meant, was that this player used to knock Tombsy's bowling around.

George was with Dakes. A sort of Pooh and stretched Piglet. Fly-half and prop forward. George's 73 with a series of eight blistering drives for four and two sixes into the off-side field was described later by Brooksie as "the best innings by a Ridge player for a long time". Russ and Middsy generously did not bat an eyelid and it is easy to take for granted Middsy, whose innings of 64 (with 12 boundaries) was his third similar score in a row. But in George's innings we saw the future and it looks good.

That Dakes should bat with great intelligence at the other end was a revelation not to mention a surprise, choosing the balls to hit and waiting patiently in between. We made 238-7 with BenDog thrashing a quick 17 no out at the end.

We prepared to field and when Geoff, who had been reading a book (mostly pictures) without a shirt all afternoon and had turned a shade of crispy brown, put half the contents of a sun-cream bottle on to his lips I really thought we were about to take the stage for a re-run of The Black and White Minstrels.

The opposition would not make 50 predicted an ex-player and when they started up with Little and Large in the form of a 14-year-old and someone who might have just eaten his brother, we must have fallen for it because at 120-0 off 22 overs things were not good.

Even worse we continued our record of one bowler collapsing per match. I remember the very first bowling machine in 1967: a rapidly rotating arm into which a ball would be fed and catapulted out until eventually a ball would fail to emerge and the only way to clear it was to feed another ball in, run for cover and wait for two balls to explode out of it in random directions.

When Dakes tore in, in his second over, with his whirligig rotating action and failed to let go of the ball at all, we knew something was up. He had bowling-machine-itis. The next ball exploded out in all directions as it were and he was done, his shoulder following his shins last week to the Parts Shop. Once again we lost a leading bowler not before a match, but during it.

At last McTaggart who bowled through at one end made the breakthrough removing Large and after a while Brooksie took a fine diving catch at mid-wicket off one of Russ's carefully bowled long-hops to dismiss another. Russ got Little too, although not before the 14-year-old had made his second consecutive league 40.

The innings went this way and that. A catch for BenDog and a catch for George, but it began to go more 'that' way than 'this' as time went on and they needed 10 to win off the last over with 3 wickets left and as described above their captain hit the winning runs off the last.

MacTaggart bowled through with scant reward for his 23 overs, 4 maidens 2-86 at one end, although I felt it served him right seeing he started to find the edge frequently as soon as we had removed a slip! Russ ended with 4 -69.

George's back prevents him from returning for a second spell. He is currently only allowed 7 overs at a time and during the afternoon there was some discussion, mostly unrepeatable, about what an 18 year-old *can* legally get up to despite not being allowed to perform the simple task of running up to bowl more than 7 overs in a row.

Yes a 'great game of cricket' but it never quite seems that way when you lose.

By now a bright pink, Geoff left hurriedly to avoid being mistaken for a lobster salad, while the rest of us licked our wounds.

At least the Lions won, and Andy Murray next day, although this hardly made up for playing on a ground flanked by a motorway, a dual carriageway, a 200 metre long industrial shed, a Frankie & Bennie's and A Holiday Inn as well as conceding 240 runs to lose off the last ball.

But at least the Holiday Inn did have a TV.

