

BRCC 2nd XI 178-9 off 45 overs

BNOCC 2nd XI 179-7 off 42.2 overs

Match lost by 3 wickets. Toss lost by useless tosser. 10 points Ridge

What Rolfedog doesn't understand about his literary skills is the immense pressure they place on mere mortals when participating in a game of cricket in which he (Rolfedog) is not involved.

But important to capture at least some detail from a spirited performance from the 2s in the first league outing of the 2015 season.

Taggart had told me how many people had been netting over the previous few months and how it was "all looking very positive". He had also told me that, in line with my wishes, I should be able to enjoy the season with minimal official commitments.....

"Can you play on the 9th?" "What about Finn?" "Err, Chesh is away so would you mind...?" "Err, seven of the team won't have picked up a bat or ball yet this season" "You don't have an umpire.....and I may need to take SKnapper to umpire for 1s" "You'll have to score yourselves". "But I WILL print you off a team sheet....and you do have a spanking new score book" Oh. Sold then.

Things looked ominous as we pulled in to BNOCC. A fair deluge hit us, forcing Finn and I to sit in the car park for some seven minutes (which gave him another seven minutes to play me some "more tunes" off his Iphone – so that was nice...) but play, as it turned out, was only delayed by ten minutes or so. We were inserted (as I suspect all division 7-9 teams losing the toss will be all season as there is nothing to be gained by fielding second in a 45/45 overs split affair where even rain breaks take overs off both sides.....hey ho)

Debutant Ben volunteered to accompany Hawks to the crease first up and then proceeded to try and put both balls he faced over the deep midwicket boundary. He missed them both – the first one missed his stumps narrowly; the second one didn't. Hawks and Big Mac compiled a seemingly 'traditional' half century partnership, before the skipper tried to despatch the tidy young spinner over midwicket again and didn't clear him. Second newcomer Graham had clearly closely analysed the skipper's rashness and tried to do the same with his third ball, which he missed by some way and some way down the track. The keeper sent him on his way (well actually a fourteen year old sent him on his way, as we had deployed our younger umpires at square leg). Hairbear tried to leather most balls he faced before skying his ninth and we had gone from 78-1 to 82-4. Good, sensible support for Hawks from both Marcus (14) and Scott (16) then took us to 158-5 before another rush of wickets reduced us to 158-8 with just three overs to go.

Scott took a fatal blow to his box from their very threatening opening bowler and skipper, which prompted a period of poorly attempted humour regarding size of the required replacement item, the potential impact on his evening's plans and their skipper's apparent desire to claim the broken one as "a trophy". The other opening bowler reaped the benefit with Scott's wicket and Shauny (it seemed to swing quite a long way – no, Shaun, sorry, it was just straight) and SKnapper followed in

the same over, though not before SKnapper had avoided the hat-trick ball by nonchalantly tucking it off middle stump, to leg. Two balls later though, mid-on nonchalantly caught SKnapper's skyer.

Enter Shaky at his pre-arranged slot of number 10 (back's gone Doug and batting stance kills it...) BNOCC crowd in for the kill as aforementioned skipper roars in.....and Shaky cuts him majestically for four!). Meanwhile, Hawks, at the other end has done exactly as requested and "held it all together" though he later confessed that the real inspiration for his longevity at the crease was the prospect of having to umpire or score if he got out.... Suddenly though we had two overs left and Hawks was on 86. He and Shaky tried to get him to the magic figure but he skied with three balls left and was finally caught (he DID have a couple of lives earlier) for a fantastic 95, having ensure we had something to bowl at. Still time for the younger and smaller (and fitter and better looking) Mac to stride to the crease for his first ever Cherwell league innings. Shaky graciously gave Finn the last ball of the innings and he defended it capably.....before then going into a stream of claims that "had he known it was the last ball of the innings, he would have smashed it....." Yes, Finn.

Our ground fielding was generally excellent and the three youngsters did particularly well as did the new boys. Shaun and Hairbear bowled with good pace and not too much luck. At various times during their innings, it felt as though we were on the edge of pinning them down and going on to win. But, to their credit, BNOCC batters rode their luck (we dropped some half a dozen catches or so) and put together three key partnerships (just as we had really, though they had visibility of what they needed to do). Scott apart, all the bowlers got a wicket. Key ones from the three youngsters, Hairbear breaking their first big stand and getting us back in it and Shauny the second one with a brilliant slower ball, which also gave us a much-needed lift. Finn got his first Cherwell wicket with a well taken caught and bowled (and yes, has taken the opportunity to remind his old man that "that is how to catch off my bowling Dad" !!) and, as Shaky advised him from behind the stumps, just needs to try to "use these nice facilities" (the wicket) a little more as he bowled quite a 'full length'!

We also bowled 26 wides. This is way too many and in a tight game such as we had, made quite a difference (they bowled five). But, on the whole, a very decent start to what could be a really positive season, now that those seven guys, who hadn't previously, have held a bat or had a bowl or got their hands on the ball in the field. And let's start a campaign to get Shaky up the order.....??

Good fun though – team spirit was excellent and the game ebbed and flowed nicely through the day and the rains stayed away. It was also played in a really good spirit by both sides, with gracious acknowledgement of the efforts of the respective youngsters and some good banter during both innings