

Match Report

Oxford and Bletchingdon Nondescripts 2s v BRCC 2s

Saturday 16th August 2014

Ridgebears narrowly avoid accusation of arriving at an away match early

DOEG loses title of "World's Most Argumentative Person"

BRCC 210-7 53 overs

Nondies 195-5 47 overs

Match Drawn (and quartered)

Paul Cheshire wanted to know whether we were meeting at 10.45 because there was a plan to travel by bicycle. We may as well have. The answer was that we *always* leave at 10.45 regardless of distance, due to some sort of travel-time-Tourettes which afflicts Taggart.

The longer answer, in a mock-jovial sort of way was that we have to build in time against Nondies to go to the wrong ground and then decamp to the right one as had happened once before.

Mercifully I was excused captaincy on the Friday night and hauled screaming into the firsts but dropped myself the following morning as I felt the 2s needed a gentle but firm and responsible pair of hands to guide them through the day's travel arrangements.

So at about 9.15am I started with a motivational email to the X1, the effect of which was to prompt Hairbear's immediate dropout with a badly swollen ankle.

He had twisted it at training the previous evening by standing on a small round object and a replacement was needed (player not ankle). The small round object turned out to be Joe Mannion who, slightly squashed, spent the day at the Oval watching Roooooooooooooooooooooot progress towards a hundred.

The only possible replacement for a small round object was a tall thin one in the shape of Freddie "Summer" Breese who was most cruelly referred to as Shaggy from Scooby-Do all afternoon. This is Fred's new soubriquet or sobriquet as is it usually spelled, or spelt as DOEG would have reminded us...if he had thought of it. However Breese is spelled or spelt Breese not Breeze.

Chesh might have been right about the cycling as several drivers went direct – have you noticed it is always the car drivers who go direct?! Steve Knapp who was already in Oxford with a client had offered to drive back to the Ridge, a journey which, looking at the metallic paint and the spoiler would probably take him about five minutes. However we suddenly had more cars than necessary especially as Scnihfph managed to turn up at the ground. Late. But with a car

We arrived before 12 noon. The Ridge youth club practiced assiduously. The oldies were watching them practice assiduously. Evan's mum and dad drove off to the shops at which point it became obvious from the complete lack of other activity that we were at the wrong ground.

The advance guard including Daly and McIndoe were sent rapidly ahead with instructions to win the toss and bat. We tore across North Oxford to get there in time and a passing alien might have seen the back door of a blue estate car suddenly open and dispense the Largest Cricket Bag in the World on to a country road. It belonged to Evan (the bag not the road). "Don't forget the shoe further back" someone cried as the occupants scattered to all parts in search.

Malik, who as usual had texted at about 11.30 to say he was in Cornwall but on his way, simply adjusted his SatNav and arrived with the rest of us who, under my wise guidance remember, had first met at the Ridge at 10.45. Well except Sniffiff.

In my defence I have so far found four websites that say the ground we went to is the right one but apparently Nondies sent out an email to all clubs informing them of their change of venue back in May. 1947. Most help

Anyway the advance guard lost the toss which was just as well as Dales had forgotten the instruction and we batted anyway.

Shaggy and Chesh drew the 'bad-luck-we-have-a-lot-of-batsmen-and-you-don't-bowl straw, Rolfey talked about selling wickets dearly, and we were soon 30-3 with DOEG complaining about two missing runs. Out of 9. Well nearly 25% I suppose. This was resolved with a count up, while DOEG and Dales undertook the longest walk around a ground resulting in DOEG's observation that "Dales likes to argue even more than ME". (Than "I" actually David Oxford English Graduate – but no worry.)

Yes the capitaine, DOEG and Malik were back in the hutch – or in Malik's case the car – so Jake the Gun and Doug (not to be confused with DOEG, and yes this has recently caused trouble on selection) baled us out with a watchful and increasingly aggressive partnership, making a nicely symmetrical 43 runs each before Jake walked for a caught behind and Doug virtually expired with an attempted hit 'over-the-top', a phrase that kept occurring to me during the day. As the young players impressed. Snipfff started as usual as though batting on hit timbers, but suddenly switched into dramatic mode. MS Donnelly played Elgar to Snippfch's The Clash, all straight drives and perfect follow-throughs. Scnipf's all-action 22 paved the way for Evan who in a difficult situation suddenly located the bat and tonked a fine 11 while MSD moved smoothly to a very classy 49no. He was only upstaged by Chesh, who, allowed in to bat by Evan with two balls to go, swept his only ball for a single and thereby claimed the day's best strike rate of 100

Shaggy claimed the best comment of the innings however when Dales was discussing the simplicity of Driving Theory Test questions, by observing that a typical multiple choice goes "If you break down on the motorway do you: a) Pull over and drink some alcohol,,, or ...". We never got any further. 210-7 was a good return from 30-3 and we then went to the other ground for tea.

Just joking .

Their innings followed a similar pattern. 30-odd for 3. Jake simmering, on the point of a tizzy-fit without *quite* boiling over, managed to bowl A. Kitchen which sounds rather clever. MSD bowled another using some Cillit Bang and then off Evan, Scniffph caught a catch that Scnipphf would have been proud of.

In fact it reminded us of the Snchipff of years ago. A flash of red, a flash of Sniffiff (don't be getting ideas) and a magnificent one-handed gully catch.

Then like us, two good partnerships. Jake and then Evan and then Jake were determined to bowl around the wicket and move the sightscreens, so much so that I considered having them removed altogether. When finally I relented under threat of even more sledging from Jake knowing that his plan would never work, he took a caught and bowled the very next ball and kindly appraised me of the wisdom of his change of action.

In between times Doug replaced Dales who had been whirling away at the other end, grumbling occasionally about the start of the football season, and finally removed the dangerous Ahmad when Knappy woke up momentarily to give a plumb LBW against him. The batsman voiced his objection but luckily our capitaine was on hand to assure him he was indeed out.

By now Jake was worked into a fever and felled a batsman of not inconsiderable girth whose teammate asked him if he had been hit on a fleshy part. Looking at him as he lay there I thought the chances were that he had been.

Like Lazarus though he rose and somehow he and his partner, who closely resembled Stan from On The Buses, started smashing us to all parts so that a possible victory turned into a possible defeat.

Luckily cheery Doug came back to bowl, calmed things down and with the last ball of the day tried to perform Swan Lake from a prone position.

They made 195-5. We needed more wickets obviously but if ever we needed reminding that a team needs 11 fielders to defend a total it was today. Chesh who is wearing the bemused expression of someone who has been dropped into a parallel universe and has suddenly realized that playing with this lot is not a bad dream but the real thing... and Freddie, - or is it Shaggy? - did wonders in the field and it must be noted that Freddie runs back from chasing the ball as quickly as he runs after it and is thus great for the over rate.

Post-match, Schnifph announced his unavailability next week on holiday. Shaggy immediately did the same. We all looked at each other, and Shaggy at Sniff. Surely not... the mind boggles.

On the way back my old blue Ford estate, boot firmly closed, was overtaken by a flash of metallic paint and spoiler. No doubt the driver was keen to arrive early at the club for next week's match.