

RIDGEBEARS VICTORIOUS IN SPECTACULAR LOVE-IN WITH ABINGDON

Brez takes 4 wickets and makes 30 not out despite series of grammatical errors

Abingdon Vale 3 128-9 (45 ov)
BRCC 2s 132-4 (34.5 ov)

Won by 6 wickets

In a shenshational return from the family holiday, Shakley(NoE) shmoked over 35 Marlboros to help the Ridgebears to victory. Although Buckingham won too, the Ridge goes into the final week with a chance of promotion.

George arrived early...from the family holiday in Cornwall; not as spectacular as Grand Canaria, the scene of the Dryden's sojourn but that is how the other half lives. George was the lucky recipient of a lift from Brez from Reading station' a journey which took as long as Malik took to arrive from High Wycombe. This roller-coaster ride with Brez set up George's roller-coaster day.

As I inspected the wicket with George I was pleasantly surprised at the number of teammates who insisted on addressing me as "Gorgeous" as they arrived. No wonder George wanted to hang around with me.

There was a sudden and uncharacteristic outburst from Sniff. His lunch sandwich had been snatched by a large dog called Stella, belonging to Baz, whose parenthood was brought into question quite forcibly by Snifph: Stella's that is, not Baz' although I must have a word with Freddie.

Doug had called to say he would be a bit late and arrived quite early: contrary as usual. Abingdon called to ask if their missing player was at our ground and Captain McTaggart made his first error of the day in telling the truth, thus ensuring they ultimately arrived with 11 men, and not 10 in the expectation of finding a non-existent eleventh at the ground. Our captain needs a bit more coaching.

The hint of a late arrival two weeks running, got McTaggart all excited once again as he started calculating the number of overs he could deduct from the opposition and the number of ciggies he could get through before the start.

Abingdon made it in time however and we like them anyway. Very soon our own umpire Uncle Alan and Abingdon's Alec Inns (which sounds rather like a national pub chain) were getting on like expectant fathers and in this atmosphere of bonhomie Taggart won the toss and only just overcame his Tourette's problem to say "We'll bowl".

After a series of unimpressive performances elsewhere, Brez opened the attack. RolfeDog predicted that the first ball would as usual be right on the mark... and his full toss was smacked for four. Having thus softened up the batsmen he bowled him with one that immediately raised suspicions of ball tampering.

Brez and Henry Donnelly put Abingdon behind the clock and Henry's 9 overs for only 18 set up the day. Frustrated by Henry's accuracy their No 3 was controversially caught behind by Baz off Brez. Controversially in the sense that any dismissal "Caught Hawkins" as 'keeper is a feat in itself. Debate raged after the match as to what the ball had actually hit but Shakey got at least a couple of extra glasses of red from the evening's discussion.

Deadpan Doug joined the slips and made the first significant observation of the day. "Brez has just used a double negative". A "*double negative*"!. Indeed, unaware of his grammatical skills Brez had shouted: "Come on everyone we are *not* making *no* noise" David Maunder (our Oxford English Graduate or is it English Oxford Graduate?) felt a momentary sharp pain somewhere on a beach in a far distant land.

This was almost too much for RolfeDog too who had had to explain recently what he thought was obvious to everyone: that Andrew Gold's 1970s hit "To Never Let Her Slip Away" is the only known song title containing a split infinitive. Fortunately the irony was not lost on Brez who, bitter at having been replaced by Shakey, soon told the captain that we needed a fielder "more straighter". A double negative followed quickly by a double comparative was almost too much and now we *all* felt David Maunder's pain far away. For Henry our Wycombe Grammarian it was almost too much as well but he recovered to almost take the catch of the season.. but not quite.

George *almost* took a catch too... but not quite. We could only assume he was still recovering from breaking the sound barrier in a carpenter's van with Brez at the wheel. He reflected on how far he had travelled that day for that moment.

Abingdon were scoring slowly but were only three down. A battle now ensued largely between Shakey(noE) and Phil Evans who might otherwise be termed a Veteran were he not the same age as me.

Lots of knowing winks and smiles were exchanged as deliveries variously beat the bat or went for four. One Legend to another apparently. Eventually this culminated in Shakey getting Phil caught and bowled with a huge smirk (from Shakey that is), off the usually totally ineffective leg-cutter.

Mr Evans all but sprinted to the pavilion to escape, but Shakey(No E) was quicker off the mark and ran him down. What we were supposed to witness was the sort of moment only understood by two Great Players, in the manner of Freddie Flintoff and Brett Lee. What actually happened was that Shakey said "I *can't* believe you fell for the leg-cutter you old fool, but we are going to have a good evening". Thus encouraged the batsman trooped off.

McTaggart decided it was time to serve up some filth (even Chris Roddick mentioned the word "pies") until he inevitably gave way to Brez again who was heard to say "innit", possibly in a conversation with Malik who was being called Malkolm by Shakey(NoE).

Every one of our fielders had a go at running out 5-year-old Will Pickford who stayed in a very long time and adopted the hedgehog-running-across-the-motorway technique of

running as hard as possible without looking backwards, left or right and without hesitating. So bemused were we that all run out chances were missed.

The innings then deteriorated into a very tedious private battle between the batsmen and both Shakey(No E) and Brez, in which Brez tore around taking two catches off Shakey while Shakey tore around taking catches off Brez and another off his own bowling for that matter to eventually dismiss Tom Guntrip who top scored with 39.

In amongst all this was a drop by George off the dangerous Whitey who then smashed Brez for a six, thoughtfully testing Brez' new boundary netting in the process, and leaving George to calculate the cost of dropped catches in terms of a) Miles travelled, b) Minutes travelled and c) Potential runs conceded, d) Sound Barriers broken

Shakey(NoE) was in balletic mood however and soon tore around the boundary in front of the pavilion taking a dramatic boundary catch off Brez to dismiss Mr White in front of a group of adoring fans.

Scripff said it was a good catch but not as good as his own sliding boundary one-hander to dismiss Phil Evans about 35 years ago. Doug said that if he had been in his usual position at long-off he would have had to dive and catch it one-handed. Shakey said "I am going to drink some wine tonight".

With the score on 124 and Brez and Shakey on four wickets each, bless them, at the start of the last over we had a good chance of keeping Abingdon under 130; a target that had been set earlier in the innings by Brez the more faster of our left-armers never known to run in not slowly, innit.

At 128-8 with one ball left we got a run out. A run out that only Rodders and Baz could contrive. A single was taken for a shot towards Rodders who "hurled" (one might say) the ball back to Baz who took it at full stretch running towards Rodders. This prompted skipper Ben Lanham at the far end to start running for a second and then change his mind as Baz, fully gloved, threw the ball in a gentle parabola to the far stumps. As the ball dribbled to the wickets from Baz' throw, Ben realised he had forgotten to get all the way back and was run out in double slow-motion.

Remember! just two throws: Rodders to Baz to far stumps:

In the dressing room Captain McTaggart said that Sky TV would have attributed the run out to Rodders as (according to Taggart's eyesight) he had thrown the ball to the far end; Rodders protested that (according to Rodders' eyesight) Shakey would have got the credit for receiving the ball and breaking the wicket. God help us! It is amazing some of our team even find their way to the ground. Just then Shnipfh walked in whistling "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds".

We hallucinated through Jude's Five Star Tea – Hey Jude - (ably assisted by another of the Posse of Tea-Wives) and Baz and Rolfey went out to bat.

Baz smashed a long hop to point and trudged off cursing his dog's parentage (Labrador with a little Great Dane if you see what I mean). RolfeDog dropped anchor, determined not to play around any skidders from Robin Newman. Robin Newman and Jim Spooner (of Bledlow) I just cannot play as they insist on bowling straight and – I swear – smiling as they let go of the ball.

George was now in and starting running everything in a “lets-run-out-the-older-hedgehog” sort of way and although RolfeGod (typing error, though an understandable mistake) almost perished under the wheels of a truck on one occasion, slowly and painfully we inched our way forward until RolfeDog announced it was important to still be there at drinks and played around one from Whitey and was LBW.

Malikolm was surprised by a full toss early on and so could not continue the pyrotechnics of the previous week a challenge which Brez took up instead after a brief innings from Doug who was cope with his excessively large tea.

Brez started off with a Chinese Cut for one, then a huge four then a swing-and-a-miss. However he soon started batting more sensibler while George started driving more harder, pleased that now it was he and not Brez in the driving seat.. if you get me, innit.

The final drama came with George on 48, needing two for his fifty (you do the maths) and one required for victory. Another of his sumptuous drives to the boundary brought us a win and brought George – I think – his first senior fifty, to much cheering. First of many, or “menny” as Brez who made 30 not out, would say.

We got rid of our usual socialites Doug, Baz and Rodders to various high-fallutin parties probably on boats on the Thames with violins and conjurors, and got down to the real business of listening to Shakey telling everyone how much he loved them over huge quantities of red wine (him) and lager or Pride (everyone else).

Everyone Else constituted a large contingent of the Abingdon X1 who woke up the next day realising they had agreed to a full fixture list of Juniors Matches next season between the two clubs, all to be played at their place with a meal provided for visiting parents.

The Abingdon retinue disappeared from the bar one by one to shower and brush up in an attempt to out-chav Shaun Dryden while Brez repeatedly hugged the unshowered RolfeDog and told him he stank. We have a very difficult relationship at times but we are attending grammar classes in an attempt to improve things.

Shakey(NoE) on the other hand who was in love with everybody by now, momentarily forgot himself and was about to address Phil as the “Greatest Legend Ever To Play At The Ridge” when only a withering stare from RolfeDog reminded him that that status was already accounted for, and avoided a potentially explosive situation.

Soon the hugging got more and more out of hand and even Sharon Shakey, who had retired behind the bar permanently for her own safety was not immune from loving approaches by Over Fifties still hallucinating from smoking strawberries at tea.

This all got mixed up with the return of the victorious 1st X1 and the news that 3-year-old Jake Easton had taken a wicket and got 16 not out, and that, dramatically, 6-year-old Matt Donnelly had not only taken a five-fer but had won the match with a Hat Trick. A good day for the youngsters.

Finally after Shakey had drunk at least ten pint-size glasses of wine and broken at least ten more, the Abingdon contingency tore themselves away from the warm embrace of Bledlow Ridge CC.

For myself, it was not at all easy to break away from the increasingly slobbery attentions of our leading bowlers and, afraid that the sobriquet of "Gorgeous" might come back to haunt me as they continued to hallucinate on a combination of strawberries and wine, I distracted them momentarily with a combination of double negatives, oxymorons and aphorisms and made a run for it.

In the distance I could hear Shakey(No E) calling "I shlove you Rolfey" and Brez calling "You don't need to run no more faster".

Innit.