

Bledlow Ridge v Kimble (Away) – Friendly

Sunday 1st May 2016

A Saint, Two Angells and the Angel Gabrielle are
not enough to defeat Kimble

Dom the Gazelle keeps Kimble on the Run

45 over match (12 –a-side)

Lost by 54 runs

Kimble: 191-9

BRCC: 137-8

“Be there, ready and changed by 1.30pm” Captain McTaggart had commanded and in he wandered at 1.30+30 seconds and proceeded to deliver a slightly tedious lecture on plans for clubs in the South East of England to completely overhaul the league cricket system on a regionalised basis from 2017 with teams divided into Zones or was it FanZones?... I can’t remember.

Neither can Marcus, whose mind was miles away in a state of bliss. Kimble’s dressing room, let alone their whole clubhouse, was covered in A4 laminated notices and Marcus was like the proverbial p** in s*** as somebody astutely put it.

Forget the Zika Virus, the outbreak of laminatis , so devastating in Bledlow Ridge in recent weeks is now out of hand and has overwhelmed the village of Kimble and will no doubt leave others in its wake especially on sunny but freezing afternoons like these.

The captains went out to the wicket to toss up and in an interesting break with tradition McTaggart gestured from afar with a few imaginary batting strokes – well the best he could muster – and returned to the dressing room to announce we were bowling. Irony he called it. - we preferred ‘senility’.

David Saint opened the bowling on his club debut. There used to be someone else known as “Saint” at the club, but now exiled in Italy his reign has ended: the Saint has been replaced by a Super-Saint.

After a couple of looseners the batsmen took a single and David bowled to someone who had no doubt spent all winter cleaning his kit, dreaming of the

return of spring, the start of the cricket season and with it the chance to bat for long periods.

He was probably contemplating a long innings when second ball, he struck a firm drive back past said bowler who being new to the club, has never seen ShakEy's method of fielding off his own bowling (with his foot), that of The Artist Formerly Known as Geoff (with his head) or Dakes' (not at all) and took a stunning aerial one-handed return catch, at the same time breaking the Olympic high jump record. By the end of the over he had taken another wicket. At this moment he considered collapsing injured never to play again leaving with us with memories of the first Freddie Flintoff to have played for the Ridge.

We got them 30-6. Somehow Mike Gillett did not get a wicket but that was because David had decided against matrydom and was instead being greedy picking up two more of his own, one of which was – wait for it – an outstanding one-handed catch by James HairBear who was not wearing Dave Bird's trousers. He had however borrowed almost every other item of equipment, including presumably, David Saint's right hand.

The man who has shared last place in the Happiest Scotsman of the Year Award with Captain McTaggart for the last three years had arrived at the ground to offer some support. Dismal Doug mentioned to someone on the boundary that Paul Daly may play a lot more cricket this year with the comment "the more the merrier". The proof will be in the pudding of course but it is hard to imagine a team with Doug, McTaggart and Dales adding greatly to the level of merriment at the club. More likely, this was the second example of irony during the day and we may have to continue relying on Brooksie's astute sense of humour instead to keep us merry.

Our dominant position prompted Captain McTaggart to ask James HairBear if he would like a bowl, but James said he had nothing to put in it. When it was explained that he was being offered the chance *to* bowl, he returned the favour with two wickets of his own (2-17 off six) and a couple of wide legside deliveries in order to get Brooksie's trousers dirty in case Brooksie was wearing trousers belonging to Dave Bird.

Alan Loxton, another debutant, replaced Mike and produced the most economical figures of the day, conceding only 14 runs from his seven overs and unlucky not to have a wicket or two, as by now, we had started trying to catch the ball with two hands not one.

At this point RolfeDog had to leave the field to dress a wound that was at least two millimetres long and which prompted the very amusing Brooksie to ask which fingernail had been damaged.

All this while Dom was fielding on the long boundary about three miles away, out of earshot one would have thought but it transpired that the prevailing wind had carried to him much of Lloyd's discussion with Brooksie about the state of

Dom's beard, which is beginning to take over and threaten mankind, well that element of mankind which has not been overrun by laminatis.

McTaggart mentioned it would be nice to chase "at least 150". Sometimes you get what you wish for and for this purpose McTaggart decided to add variety to the bowling.

We had already informed their scorer that our bowler "Saint", had been replaced by an Angell. "What? --- "Angell..." came the reply "...with two 'lls' ... as opposed to Christmas with no-el" we quipped wittily and Sniff giggled.

Jai bowled his first four overs for the senior club before Marcus – who was by now covered in laminating paper and Dom's beard, came on to bowl. "Bowler's name?" ... "Angell... with two lls" came the reply..."What? Another one?" queried the scorer doubtfully.

Inevitably Dom was the next to be called on to try his arm. "Bowlers name - another Angell I suppose?" called the Kimble scorer, an Unbeliever, slightly sarcastically.

"Well you're not going to believe this" came our reply... " His name is Gabrielle".

While the scorer was being brought round with smelling salts and the aroma of laminated paper, Dom had a long spell. He's used to these of course as he has a particularly long name. But this one was with the ball.

Dom went through his entire not inconsiderable, repertoire. After 11 deliveries, Brooksie started walking to the other end for the next over but the umpire remained unmoved (Brooksie never could count to six) "One more ball" said the umpire, "Well if we're lucky" said McCaptain who has spent much of the winter attending courses in the art of motivational leadership.

And so it came to pass that Dom's long bowling spell did come to an end and for the remainder of the innings he stayed within earshot of Lloyd and Brooksie in case the subject of beards was raised.

Our wish of chasing over 150 was granted, helped by McTaggart who came on to bowl and conceded the only six of the innings before conning some late batsmen into donating their wickets to him, just in case he was thinking of bringing on Lloyd instead.

Their score would have been even more than 191 had it not been for the athletic performance of Schniff on the deep cover boundary. He had clearly upped his game for the benefit of a young lady watching nearby, a point which did not escape Brooksie who was in particularly talkative mood. A series of encouraging remarks ensued along the lines of Schniphh impressing "his missus" (Sniff being madly in love these days) only to learn that this young lady was Mrs Saint who had arrived to support her husband (as if he needed any on the day) and to gain her first impression of Bledlow Ridge cricketers and their sense of humour.

Undeterred, David returned at the top end and inevitably took a wicket straight away, inducing a catch to Brooksie with no help from Snipff – another example of irony during the afternoon. David ended with 5-22 off six.

Kimble ended on 191-9. Our one-handed catching had proved rather better than our two-handed catching and one of the beneficiaries was the opener A Whitehead who ended on 81 not out. He was nevertheless entitled to be pleased with his innings and received various congratulations from our team up till the point that Captain McHappy shook his hand and sent him on his way to tea with a 'tart': "*How many times did we drop you?*"

Such a long report and yet only half way through. Well actually, the second half will not take long and would hardly take any space at all had it not been for a very special performance by the Angel Gabrielle (aka Dom) as opposed to an Angell Gabriel.

Yes Dom's career-best performance outshone RolfeDog (14) and Lloyd (a very lucky 58) who gave us a start. Martin Harris with 17 gave us a Sniff of a chance, but then Brooksie was out for 1 (Dom took note of this) Jai survived 14 balls on his debut for 4 and Alan paid a brief visit to the wicket while his wife – who Brooksie had not mistaken for a friend of Sniff's – melted the icicles from her hands with a hot cup of tea.

As the game receded it was Dom who caught the eye with a startling display of running between the wickets of which the late great runner-and-caller Sidney Bird would have been particularly proud.

Dom batting with HairBear represented the most hirsute partnership to have represented the Ridge, one which RolfeDog and Lloyd will do well ever to emulate, at least without help from Shane Warne Hair Products.

A Kimble club stalwart kindly took over the scoring and interpreted Marcus' squiggle of "Gabrielle" as "Gazelle" so Dom, with his sharp hearing must have heard this and decided to rise to the challenge.

They set off for a run, Dom and Hairbear that is. Well HairBear set off for a run but Dom set off for two, head down, turbo full on. HairBear (HB) suddenly spied his partner heading back in his direction and set off, but by now The Angel Gabrielle was braking. HB reacted by quickly going in reverse, but Dom had to do the same, was a long way from home and had a bad case of wheelspin. He eventually gained traction, turned and went just as the ball rolled past him, both of them in a race to the bowler's end. It was a tight call and caught up in the emotion of it all Dom gave himself out and began to leave the pitch only to discover that he had not been given out by the umpire, which is what counts.

Having got through this, HairBear heard his McCaptain shout "Hit Out" or similar, and expired next ball, thinking the call was "Get Out". Either way it had the desired effect because it soon brought McTaggart to the wicket following a brief

interruption by Marcus whose short innings feature one piece of running where he and Dom were both going in the same direction.

As the game expired too, we were treated to a masterclass from Dom who played the sumptuous cover drive he has been threatening for a couple of seasons now and ended on a career-best 15 not out.

Dom left the left the field to applause and as he reached the boundary, generously wished Brooksie, who had made 1, the best of luck next time he batted. Our 'new' Saint hadn't needed any luck: we now realize that Richard Sainter, aka The Artist Formerly Known as Saint, was merely keeping the seat warm until a real Saint came along.

The Saint is gone ... long live the Saint.

A Footnote

An observation from a cricketing hack. Purely my own views, not the club's, perhaps not the same as anyone under 25, not the same as anyone drunk on a diet of T20.

Limited overs matches are often far more tedious than 'proper' games.

'Proper' games? – what are these? They are games where a draw is one of three possible results.

'Boring', I hear some of you say.

The thing about most drawn games is that there was the possibility of a win for one or other team, right to the last. This does depend on both teams being prepared to risk losing to win, because with out this you can have boring draws, I grant you that.

Just as you can have boring T20s, 40-40s 50-50s etc.

'No you can't'!

'Yes you can': as soon as it becomes obvious the team batting second cannot win the game is boring. That might be after just a few overs. There is no incentive left for ether team. No incentive for the batting side to go for it, no incentive for the bowling side to take wickets.

In a 'proper' game, the team bowling second has to keep taking wickets to win the game. They have to use guile and tactics, sometimes feeding runs to keep the other side interested, sometimes working hard not to let the game run away.

If the game is effectively over after a few overs of the second innings of a limited overs game and there are loads of overs left to be bowled, it will be more 'boring' than a match in which a draw can be a result.

Just saying.