

Bledlow Ridge CC 2s v Cropredy 2s

Saturday 8th August 2015 – Home

Ridge narrowly out manoeuvred in military operation

Postman replaces Chef in Roll Drama

BRCC 134-8 (45 overs)

Cropredy 136-1 (29.5 overs)

Result: Lost by 9 wickets

I was handed the phone while in the shower. “Psst...Rolfey” said a voice in hushed tones, “Secret Agent Cheshire here, to discuss strategy for this afternoon’s encounter”.

We agreed to a telephone rendezvous after the shower was over.

I accepted the invitation to be Vice-Captain and was reprimanded for not sounding as though I had just been given a Knighthood - this was beginning to feel like a job appraisal. Each person’s role in the team was forensically discussed. The batting order would involve Chesh at 8, 5 or 1 and Detective-Sergeant Dickers at 1, 8 or 5 One thing was for certain, Bursar Dom would bat 10; what does that say for Ben Cooper (Agent Cooperman) selected to bat below Dom at 11?

All the bowling options were reviewed; Dog Handler RolfeDog was even nominated a fielding spot at mid-on and it was not yet 10am. If only the 1s managed the minutiae in such detail.

There was no mention of Agent TombsDog who has left the club to spend more time with his cat...and to spend time undercover at Bledlow Village CC, sabotaging operations in advance of a Ridge takeover.

At the ground early: Laura delivered a huge range of food undercover and instructed Quartermaster James to cut the rolls before tea-time. Dom arrived and announced to his Captain “I won’t be able to run today”. This seemed a bit like a chef arriving for work and announcing “I won’t be able to cut rolls today”, or a Postman saying “I won’t be able to go on strike today”. Dom, or rather Dom’s entire leg, was paying the price for a lengthy slide to try and save a boundary on Wednesday night’s T20.

I enjoyed a pre-match net, geared up to face an onslaught from Ben Cooperman at full throttle. This was rapidly concluded, under instruction from Sergeant Cheshire who insisted on fielding

practice whereupon I took off my pads, thigh pad, arm guard, gloves, inner gloves and of course last but not least my box, stopped one ball, was advised by the Sergeant that we were batting and that I should put back on my pads, thigh pad, arm guard, gloves, inner gloves and of course last but not least my box.

Lance Corporal Cheshire opened the batting with RolfeDog. The only thing that Chesh had omitted in his military pre-match planning was a match ball.

We got one. Chesh and RolfeDog faced it for 22 overs before Chesh was bowled for 24. Chesh was advised by Birdy, as spectator, that he has a technical flaw... and we had thought he was faultless. Chesh seemed very proud of it however, without revealing what it is.

Perhaps it is being bowled after making 24?

Sapper Maunder joined RolfeDog and rather than get involved in a philosophical debate with him, say about the spelling of manoeuvre (a soubriquet or possibly a sobriquet for manoeuvre) or whether a batsman should ask for "middle" or for "centre", RolfeDog lost the will to survive and was bowled for 20 which meant he had scored even slower than the hitherto flawless, Brigadier Cheshire.

Why the slow scoring? Cropedy, on top of the Division, bowled straight. How dare they? Three balls down leg side in the first ten overs... that was all.

David made nine including two swept fours, Nathan looked promising before being caught. Chief Medic Williams joined Major Hari. Their flashing sabres brought a few boundaries before Luke was caught and before Hari was adjudged caught behind by RolfeDog who, after 25 overs of batting in the heat was immediately sent out to umpire the rest of the innings by Drill Sergeant Cheshire.

James came in to wag the tail. Uppermost on his mind was the fact that he was not in the kitchen preparing the rolls. This news was conveyed to the sidelines whereupon Postman Gary, our new recruit took on full responsibility for 'delivering' teas without ever once going on strike.

James was joined by Left-Tenant Ben Hillary who looked very promising, that is until Ben mistakenly accepted James' offer of an impossible single and was run out by about three feet. "Go and cut some rolls" said James to Ben as Ben departed.

The Man Who Could not Run joined The Man Who Could Not Cut The Rolls.

It has to be said that Dom, 3 not out, has never batted better. He kept out the good ones and played two fine shots albeit both to fielders. Ironic that The Man Who Could Not Run was *not* run out by James while The Man Who Could Not Cut The Rolls cut and carved his way to a fine 27 not out meaning we set Cropedy 135 to win.

The restart was delayed by the absence of a match ball.

It was a hot day and Hari mentioned the risks of sunburn but to my surprise 'not to worry about him' as he was "burnt already". I pinched myself. Was this political incorrectness gone mad? One of us should be outraged but I could not decide which. How refreshing.

Hari whirled away accurately from the bottom end and Cadet Nathan the top. Nathan has the advantage of youth.

When Nathan bowled a full toss the left-hander hit him about 80 feet up a tree; not *him* exactly, the ball of course whereupon NCO Dom Gabrielle was stationed below where the ball had gone and immediately called for a step-ladder; someone else called for a fire-engine. Whatever the case, The Man Who Could Not Run now became The Man Who Could Not Hide.

Nathan, confident, bowled the right-hander out with a well-disguised slower delivery. Talking about slow deliveries, we discovered later that Postman Gary was continuing to do a sterling job in the clubhouse and kitchen, still without going on strike.

It was time for Agent Cooperman to bowl. He removed his cap to reveal a Che Guavara headband and plonked his cap on the floor as a bowler's mark, which was soon replaced by a plastic beer barrel top. (He looked a little strange wearing a plastic beer barrel top between overs.)

After one over it was evident that Ben's pace from bowling in the nets had dissipated. There was a suspicion that he had been smoking the wrong kind of strawberries in the interim. He was ratcheted up and gained an extra yard and occasionally had 'Keeper Luke scurrying, a blur of colour in his orange-peel –style cap.

Ben even 'stretched' to stopping shots by reclining full length and on one unfortunate occasion interrupted the travel of the ball in a tender area; "Count them Ben" called Dickers. This presents a challenge to the average RIdgeBear however in Dickers' case he can stop at "one". "One" was the number of legs Dickers nearly had soon afterwards after being clobbered by the ball in the funniest incident since Malcolm (remember him?) suffered the same fate.

We all held our breath when The Man Who Could Not Run, tore towards the boundary at the spot at which Wednesday's injury occurred; this time an incident was averted and Vice-Corporal RolfeDog, now clearly suffering in the sun, exhorted Quartermaster James to "keep on your soles". "No, I said *soles* James, not *rolls*". Neither of which made any sense.

So we lost by 9 wickets, but earned respect. The team gathered for a Debrief in which Quartermaster James narrowly won the Man of The Match Award over Secret Agent Cooperman with the help of a bent coin.

Bursar Dom was awarded the champagne moment for a shot that yielded no run (RolfeDog managed 53 of those) and the team was then treated to a RolfeDog cricketing masterclass.

At least would have been, but for the presence of Mr Contrsuggestible aka Barrack Room Lawyer Maunder who has never allowed a diatribe or a lecture from Lieutenant Colonel RolfeDog to go unchallenged. You see, RolfeDog urged all batsmen so inclined to ask for a “centre” guard and not “middle”. This was like red rag to a bull; David Oxford English Graduate (DOEG) Maunder maundered on long enough for RolfeDog to fall asleep, before DOEG picked up a history book entitled “The Centre Class in Centre England in the Centre Ages”.

For some of us, the evening extended long into the night, if that makes any sense, as we all prepared for just one more week of the longest goodbye in history. Who will replace Field Marshall Cheshire when or if he finally leaves us and when he gets there will he tell the Australians who won The Ashes? Yes, probably by ringing each of them during their morning shower.

Disclaimer: The Post Office and its staff do a wonderful job and any connection between postmen and strikes is either imaginary or last happened in the 1970s.