

COMBINED MATCH REPORT

Bledlow Ridge 1s v Abingdon 2s (Home)
Bledlow Ridge 2s v Abingdon 3s (Away)

Saturday 29th August 2015

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Ridge well-known strength-in-depth ensures first win-double of 2015

Rory and Hari in Boundary SlugFest

It's a family affair as team of counsellors and advisors guide the Twos to first season win

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Home

Abingdon 2s 116-8 (53 ov)
BRCC 1s 122-3 (24.1 ov)
ov)

Won by 7 wickets

Away

Abingdon 3s 133-6 (45 ov)
BRCC 2s 137-1 (36.5

Won by 9 wickets

The Ridge put paid to the myth that it is hard to get teams out, with a fine late show of availability. On holiday, at a rock festival, left the club, injured, or left the club and injured, none of these proved sufficient to defeat the most persuasive man on the planet, Ian "I'll take that as a 'Yes' " McTaggart.

It did look a bit dodgy early Friday evening. In the bar Dom was asking a barmaid by the name of Ivana "How's your Smuggler behaving tonight? As the police dragged him away I wondered "Where are the young players this weekend?"

On an educational trip apparently, attending some event in Berkshire. The famous spelling festival perhaps or was it the reading festival? Don't they teach them that stuff

at school nowadays? You'd have expected David Oxford English Graduate (DOEG) to be there but he was being threatened with the 2s captaincy instead.

Rory was not sure how he was going to make it from his football match ending at 1pm for a 12.30pm start for the 1s at the Ridge. Just as worryingly, 2s Captain Doug (axed after top scoring the previous week for the 1s) had expressed his reservations about travelling to an away match with eight colleagues, no umpire and no scorer. He trumped this with the announcement that he had a three hour Saturday morning meeting in Marlow starting at 9am which might make his arrival in Abingdon for 12.30 a little difficult.

"Who arranges a meeting on the morning of a cricket match" said an astonished McTaggart. Then, remembering Jude's reaction to Dismal Doug's departure for cricket on return from family holiday the week before, he concluded "It's got to be marriage guidance".

McTaggart called Doug's bluff: Javed came through, as did Jack – preferring to train for a 120 mile cycle ride by playing cricket than spending a second week trailing a 60+-year-old Richard up mountainous roads.

Thus went the text: *"I have got you 11 players, and an umpire and a scorer. We are now looking for a sports psychologist and a physio."*

"I'm a qualified physio too" piped up Richard. So Doug was informed that he would also have a physio, and McTaggart threw Marriage Guidance Counsellor into the mix too. There was no escape for Doug. He was playing, he was captain and in the event of late arrival his captaincy role would be assumed by DOEG or is it DEOG, but in any case not to be confused with DOUG.

In the meantime Rory became properly available having just signed for Chelsea or some other mediocre mid-table club. We locked up the bar and went home.

At the ground the next day, McTaggart expressed his surprise that Abingdon had chosen to bat while at Abingdon at about the same time, Doug drove regally into the ground to find waiting for him: 10 teammates, an umpire, a scorer, a physio, a marriage guidance counsellor, a sports psychologist, an English Graduate, a trainee cyclist, a spare groundsman, a lawyer, a postman, an IT consultant and a former educationalist. Taggart had done his job even if he had over-egged it a bit.

In both matches, Abingdon batted first.

At home it was several overs before they scored their first run off the bat. Needless to say they could rely on the odd wide although in both innings, after an initial flurry the umpires got bored and the wides dried up, or perhaps they had each used up their quota. Talking of umpires, it is often said that cricket is a 'sideways' game; it is not often however that this extends to the bowler's end umpire, one of whom stood sideways at the wicket as the bowler approached shifting his position at the last moment so that he was almost behind centre stump at the point of 'delivery' (more about postmen later). When Brooksie as 'keeper stands up to the stumps he stands unusually wide, so later on when this happened it seemed that the two of them were setting up a game on a completely different wicket.

We got on top early. Tight bowling and sprightly fielding - Sniff was making his season's debut after all. There had been a few introductions in the dressing room. Sniff hadn't met Jonah for example, and Jonah explained he is about to study Agriculture and Equine Management. Having spent a few weeks at the Ridge he is considering

amending the latter to *Bovine* Management. Nevertheless he galloped enormous distances around the boundary to save valuable runs. In fact it is rather like sending a dog after a ball... it always comes back albeit a bit ragged and out of breath.

He also won the Drogba prize for the biggest dive of the day.

At Abingdon Mike Gillett – the only Ridgebear ever to have had a cup competition named after him - was getting stuck into a spell of 11 overs 0-21, figures which later in the evening I tried to convince Dakes were better than his 3-17 off 17. Yes Dakes had a good day before going off to sloth on the boundary.

Matt's bowling had replaced Rory who could not remember where the stumps were and Matt got Russ Turner – yes, remember him?, - to take a sharp catch at backward point before being mean and bowling out someone half his age with the next ball.

At the other ground Vaj bowled four overs for only six runs but was brutally replaced by Captain Doug, with a postman. "You are perspicacious" said DOEG to Doug; "I have always been heavily built" said Doug to DOEG; the rest of the team called for a dictionary.

Postman Gary bowled a postie's mix of slow deliveries, quicker deliveries, late deliveries, a few signed-fors and inevitably the odd non-delivery, all of which was a new experience it being after 1.30 in the afternoon when he has usually finished his stint or his round and like all good posties is down the betting shop, or at the pub buying a round, after his round...oh dear this could go on for ever...

Back at The Ridge, because he is only 9 years old, Matt had to come off after seven overs. David Haydn Llewellyn Jones, a scorer's dream, had three overs and this signalled the arrival of Hari.

'His name's not really Harry is it?' asked their umpire. 'No it's not Harry it's Hari' I replied. In fact it's Harry Krishnan I said at which news the umpire produced a collection box and started doing a little jig. "Better than that, it is Harikrishnan Balakrishnan" I countered at which point the jig turned into a dance. Back at Abingdon everyone was break-dancing because – I kid you not – Baskaravelu Ramsundhar had just been joined at the crease – or possibly at the hip – by Ramsundhar Baskaravelu. I don't make this stuff up you know, couldn't if I tried. Check the Cherwell website. Wendy, scoring, collapsed in a heap.

Naturally this was the time for perspicacious Doug to try bowling Saeed Ajmal not least because this is a name that gives the scorers a chance, Wendy being more used to words of four letters and names like Jack Shaw.

Let's speed this up a bit. Matt bowled a total of 10-2-31-2. Hari bowled a fine full length and surprised us all, not least our keeper with his pace off five paces...if you see what I mean. Decidedly sharp. "More 'carry' than you Dakes" I said – "Yeh I know" came the it-doesn't-bother-me-I'm-having-a-rest-thank-you reply. "More 'carry' than you Matt" I said and got a rather different response, namely the sort of look that says "If I ever get the chance to bowl at you I'll knock your block off".

That might not be a bad idea. Dementia is already setting in. Three times I called Rory to move to a new position in the field. Three times he didn't answer. It turned out to be Jonah. This happened more than once and when I eventually called Rory "Hari", Rory was heard to say "This is no longer funny" and called for a nurse.

All this time their opener stayed in and copped a certain amount of stick from Rory which was a bit harsh seeing he ended up as the match's top scorer.

Whenever we took a wicket we had the usual huddle, or rabble, plus motivational captain's speech. Believe me it can be quite hard for a captain, towards the end of the season. He has made at least one speech per match at the start of each innings and one every time we have taken a wicket, so when you are approaching your two hundredth effort at saying something worth listening to it is hard to be original. But McTaggart managed it.

He told the team he wanted "gentle aggression". Sniff took a wild swing and punched me gently on the arm so I pushed McTaggart to the ground and kicked him gently in the Cairngorms.

We soon found out what he really meant when he came on to bowl. In the same match we had the fastest bowler off five paces and now the slowest bowler off five paces bowling to the slowest batsmen in the world (with the possible exception of RolfeDog.). The other batsman, Darley, expired waiting for one delivery to arrive (much the same problem that Abingdon 3s batsmen were having while facing Postman Gary's bowling) and gave a catch to Sniff who was wearing his 1930s shirt. Back at Abingdon, Abingdon 3s were five down for 110 and Ian Kerrigan was bowling in tandem with Jack. This gave Jack the idea of cycling behind Richard on a tandem as an easier option than cycling 120 miles on his own next month. Someone had found a dictionary and called to Captain Doug that earlier, DOEG had clearly meant to say "chubby".

Ian took a wicket but unfortunately Jack the trainee cyclist, despite the assistance of a physio, a marriage guidance counsellor, a sports psychologist, an English Graduate, a postman, a spare groundsman, a lawyer, an IT consultant and a former educationalist, his mother scoring and most significantly of all, his step-father umpiring... was unable to take a wicket.

Abingdon 3s ended on 133-6 off their allocation of overs. At the Ridge their 2s ended on 116-8 off their 53, yes 53 overs! Captain McTaggart 7-3-13-1 and Harry 11-4-14-2. We completed our overs almost half an hour early which is quite remarkable but unfortunately does not, as someone suggested, result in bonus points.

At home we had one of Roz' award-winning teas, at least the fourth of the season. I bumped into Brooksie once in Chinnor when he had popped out to get them both a takeaway – he spoils her rotten in return.

McTaggart must have made a speech but if he did I wasn't listening. David Glendower Parry Owen Jones made 11, and Rory joined RolfeDog. Or was it Jonah – or Hari for that matter? Not Hari because him I *can* recognize as he is taller than the other two. Sledging is overrated and what some people call sledging is not really worthy of the name it just being a bit of rubbish or gentle banter. Whatever the case, it is to be expected to receive a comment or two from time to time. So when a young bowler beat me all ends up I was not surprised to hear someone say: "Too good for you squire". I was however, a little surprised to look up and learn that these words were spoken by the opposition umpire. Where might this end? "Didn't see that one did you"? "Don't get yer pads in front you old fool?"

Dave Jones had made 11, Rolfedog 19 and MSD 1 when Harry or Hari joined Rory (I think it was Rory – might have been Jonah) who had already begun to press the throttle. It became a SlugFest. 'Anything you can hit I can hit harder'. Abingdon got the idea and put four leg side fielders on the boundary. In such a situation it is customary to review the field and adjust your strokeplay, by hitting the ball somewhere else.

Not Rory and Hari. They were in a private battle to hit the biggest six and their Slogathon concluded when Rory did actually manage to hit one over the off side, which was misfielded by Carol and Dave Dakin who were walking around the boundary at about the point that Dales is usually fielding fast asleep after bowling. Hari 29 not out and Rory 54 not out and The Ridge 25 points and a rise of one place in the table. In the bar we had a text from Delighted Doug that the 2s needed only four to win with nine wickets left. Just for a moment we thought Gary might have been batting but it turned out that as Doug is awaiting delivery of an important package he can't afford risking Gary being 'on strike' at any time until it arrives.

So a good day for the 2s as well and eventually they began to return to the club. In the car park DOEG said he was going to pop home first "to smarten up a bit" and Dales returned to say "I scored my age" – "What 74?" said someone. He and DOEG had knocked off the runs with unbeaten half-centuries each.

When DOEG returned to buy a jug, wearing a t-shirt and casual slacks (DOEG not the jug that is) it was hard to see in what way he had "smartened up a bit". Clearly this does not matter too much to Laura who, on being asked what it is like to go out with a Superstar replied "You'll have to ask David". *And* she knows the off-side law.

Two teams, two umpires and two scorers (thanks Tom) and two wins.

What did we learn? Well there's always hope. Especially when Captain McTaggart is threatening to pin anyone who moves up against the bar-room wall to 'persuade' them to play or umpire or score.

One more thing has been learned. Or learnt. The era of positivism is over. Chesh spent a year getting players to play above themselves, being positive, organized, optimistic, full-on. And the first victory has occurred under a man who is worried about the non-arrival of an important package, the one-and-only Dismal Doug. They are poles apart, almost literally now, come to think of it with Chesh down-under.

One more week and the 1s could be safe and the 2s could get off the bottom... and then you never know. We do need people to play as there are a number of not-availables so we need to make the effort one more time. There isn't another reading festival this week is there?

Judging by President Stevens' text late that evening "Ubelievable, well dun", perhaps there should be.

Donald Trump is currently on vacation