

The One that Got Away

Wolverton 2 142ao (49 overs)

BRCC 2 130-8 (51 overs)

Match drawn

After a trying week with regard to availability, in the end we had to give in and travel to Wolverton with 10. A decent 10, but nonetheless 10.

Safely ensconced behind the wheel, the non-playing skipper cum umpire consoled himself that at least he wouldn't have to deal with any more selection dramas for a couple of days and could drop into a dreamy state where he was calling persistent wides against Tombsdog.

And then the phone rang.

Samdog was ill. Really ill. No way he could play. Cherwell League rules require that if you have 2 teams playing, the 1s MUST field 11. Failure to do so renders the 2s game forfeit, irrespective of how many players they might have (or not have). We considered a pleading phone call to the League, explaining the sudden onset of dengue fever at a point where the 2s had already left for Milton Keynes, however it was judged safer not to open that particular can of worms and a frantic search was set in place to secure an 11th body.

In the interests of avoiding spoilers for the 1s report, I'll leave it there, but suffice to say, we were back up to 10, albeit arriving in dribs and drabs.

Dickers called correctly and elected to bowl, a bravish decision given that we only had 8 players on the ground at this point, but Malcolm arrived uncharacteristically early (12.55) and we opened with Vaj's nephew, a 14 year old we had seen for 5 minutes in the net the previous Tuesday. The decision however was inspired as Hamzah bowled a near perfect line, his first 18 balls producing nothing more than a dot in the scorebook. Tombsdog was equally miserly at the other end, and at the end of the 6th over, Wolverton had raced on to 1 without loss. The excellent bowling was supported by an even better performance in the field as young and old alike, including the late arriving (on account of not knowing whether he was playing 1s or 2s), Sniffdog, flung themselves around thwarting all attempts at runs. Hamzah had to give way after 6 to Jamie, who in true poacher's fashion promptly uprooted both openers' stumps. At the other end, Tombsdog swung one back into the left hander and castled him, before being outrageously wided by Taggart. It was all looking suspiciously good.

A couple of the middle order swung more in hope than expectation and inevitably a few made it to the boundary, but every time we needed a wicket, Jamma seemed to oblige (finishing with 6).

Nathan replaced Geoff's dodgy knee, and having bowled a couple of unplayable rippers, dropped a rank half tracker which the batsman obligingly hit straight into Hamzah's hands.

We held every catch, including a bizarre one handed effort from Vaj when he appeared to be trying to get out of the way, and one for our third wicket keeper in three games, Dave Maunder, who was chirpy, busy and very tidy throughout. When Glen Dickenson (Wolverton's captain) came to the

wicket, with 7 down, a little sanity was brought to proceedings and he made a solid 32, bringing some respectability to their score before being run out for the last wicket.

143 in 51 looked a highly gettable total and Ady and Waj started positively enough adding 30 in the first 10 overs. At this point, Ady decided to test the fielders. The parameters for this test ran along the lines of, "I'll hit it straight to you, you see if you can gather it and throw it back the 15 yards to the keeper before Vajid gets here"

Test passed

Dave Maunder came in and made a lot more than of late, and Ady pushed on to 30, before attempting to swat a moth away with his bat, and in the process allowed a full toss to hit the base of his stumps. Nevertheless, at drinks, we were 71-2 off 25, and thoroughly in control. But then somebody applied the handbrake. The next 14 overs produced just 20 runs and 1 wicket. Suddenly we were under a bit of pressure, but with 6 wickets in hand, it was still manageable. Jamie came in and smashed a couple of sixes off the leading edge (goodness knows how far they would have gone if he'd middled them), but skied one in an effort to push on, and Nathan, having batted patiently for 20, hit a tracer bullet to cover which was really well held.

With three overs to go, we needed 15 to win.

We scored 2.

Sniff did realise that perhaps we had been a little over cautious and tried to hit the last ball for 13, but only succeeded in losing his off stump, thus presenting Wolverton with an extra point.

Conclusion (perspective version)

We travelled to Wolverton, a team that were in contention for promotion until the last weeks of last season, with 10 men, and missing 85 of the 109 wickets we took last year. We bowled and fielded beautifully, had a bowler get 6, had significant contributions from our 2 14 year olds, were in the game throughout, and took 9 points without losing. Had you offered that to Dickers or Taggart at 11am, they would have thought long and hard about taking it.

Conclusion (reality check version)

Their bowling was fair, but almost certainly not the tightest or most penetrative we will face all season. Had we stroked/run/scrambled 3 more runs in the last three overs and saved the 8th wicket, the game points would have gone from 14-9 to 12-10, a swing of 3 points. As this correspondent is fond of reiterating, and will continue to do so without apology, we were promoted last year by 2 points. You do the math.