

Bledlow Ridge 1s v Sandford St Martin 2s

Away : Saturday 25th August 2018

**Family Bust-Up as RolfeDog Disappears
Down Black Hole Created by Chitty-
Chitty-Bang-Bang**

**Gilet Combusts as SamDog Makes 132 and
The Ridge Secures Promotion on Day of
Records**

**Umpire Gains Revenge as Guilty
Verdict is Passed in Post-Match Court
Case**

BRCC: 382-5 (50 overs)

SSM: 274-5 (50 overs)

Result: BRCC Won by 108 runs

So many questions to answer: Who is the best-looking RidgeBear? Could we win without Dakes? Would we get promotion today? Would we be able to find Sandford St Martin? Who is the fairest of them all? What is Quantum Physics? Does Cooperman chop wood? What is the meaning of Ben Ackland Snow? Why was Ben Keeping not available?

Just as we mused on the last of these questions a silent car landed gently on the car park. Its doors and its boot opened and a mechanism removed the driver from the car, placed him upright on the grass, removed a kitbag from the boot, placed it in his right hand and remotely closed all the doors which flapped behind him like a pigeon completing a bath.

If this was Wallace, where was Gromit? And was the vehicle a Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang for grown-ups?

On second sight this Wallace-in-a-Tesler turned out to be an investment banker with beautiful wavy hair, suave good looks and over 600 runs banked (geddit?) for the season. It was not Wallace, it was his personal adviser BenDog alias BenGod.

“Why are you here BenDog?” asked BirdDog “You are not available”. A stunned BenDog imagined all those WhatsApps, text messages and team lists on the website and realised his butler must have missed them all. ‘What is the market like for replacement butlers?’ he mused.

“I was always available”, he pleaded’, I said I’d let you know if I thought of somewhere to go on holiday even further away than Cornwall.

“Like the Silly Isles” asked BirdDog, remembering the one geography lesson he ever attended. “Like the Scilly Isles” corrected BenDog who had studied metaphysics at Hogwarts and instinctively knew BirdDog had misspelt the word in his mind.

“You’d better go and see Captain SamDog” said BirdDog.

BenDog walked into the dressing room at the moment SamDog was saying to RolfeDog what a relief it was not to have BenDog in the team and the worry about what time he would arrive. BenDog had in fact managed to arrive early for a game he wasn’t playing in.

“Well he’s got to play said RolfeDog” and went to tell Birdy he was dropped. Birdy for his part, made the point that as Sandford St Martin (SSM) were far more intelligent than us, he had to play because he had been to Princes Risborough Uni.

“Well I could go home and spend the afternoon with my wife” offered BenDog. SamDog instinctively knew that this was the last thing that Hermione would want and that in any case she would not give him catching practice (see last week’s report re the Loxtons).

So SamDog fired RolfeDog, his father, mentor, tutor and cricket coach. Axed, without ceremony. “After all I’ve done for you” said RolfeDog. “Remember

when you locked me in my room in Year 8, until I finished my Quantum Physics homework?" asked SamDog "I told you then, you'd pay for it some day".

"In that case, said RolfeDog, I'll go and spend the afternoon with Hermione, remembering the day he accompanied this six-foot blond, former ladies Rowing Blue to a Varsity Rugby Match, when a number of people randomly stopped her to congratulate her on her choice of handsome partner (and Hamsah and Hollywood hadn't even been heard of then) and to ask him for investment advice.

And so it came to pass that every Dog has its day even if it means that SamDog and BirdDog conspire to replace RolfeDog with BenDog. BenDog in a fit of jealousy forbade RolfeDog from visiting Hermione.

A cricket match broke out and the Greatest Living Batsman in History, aka Midds, opened the batting with The Greatest Living Batsman of 2018, BenGod.

The first great news of the afternoon came from The Ridge 2s where Chesh had successfully run out Taggart without facing. "Taggart is the only person we'd want that to happen to more than you RolfeDog" said one of his good mates, Brooksie or Birdy. Later, in the evening Chesh would spend hours trying to make up for it by buying the Scotsman alcohol under the impression that it helps to feed the patient with his favourite poison.

SSM only had ten but the opening trio of Ben Ackland Snow (BAS) was making the ball sing, with similar bowling from Ben Taylor at the other end. A bowler can still bowl a good ball without a full complement of fielders and so it was that Midds got a cheesecake (or a Jaffa if you did not go to Princes Risbro Uni) from Ben Taylor who also once went to university.

Captain SamDog joined BenGod and started with a series of fluent shots through 3rd man off the middle of the edge. Records were beckoning. First a 50 for SamDog, 100 partnership, then a 50 for BenGod, 150 partnership and so it went on.

Gilet was in the scorebox where injured SSM captain George Thorne was using a computer programme to score. The combination of this technology and all these Ridge landmarks made Statto-Gilet occasionally set on fire and froth at the mouth. RolfeDog, still reeling from the afternoon's events was called upon to revive him with a series of fine jokes.

There was almost a runout when in a rehearsed move, a SSM fielder at cover slid as if celebrating a goal for Man U (chance would be a fine thing) and propelled the ball hard off his knee to extra cover who almost ran SamDog out.

Otherwise the batsmen were making hay, this being a ground in the farming community as the sweet aroma of manure nearby reminded us, but Nathan "Skippy" Marsh came on as fourth change and asked a few questions like "Fancy a barbie mate?" in a distinctive Antipodean accent.

He should have bowled earlier but one can only assume that he was not allowed to bowl for the first 80 minutes to satisfy some immigrant quarantine regulations, or perhaps there is a language barrier or perhaps SSM do not recognise his university degree.

The partnership reached 236 and with Gilet on his third sedative, BenGod missed one from Skippy and was cleaned up, which was a special treat for someone who has spent the last six or seven years cleaning up after a brood of children.

On returning to the pavilion he kindly donated his score of 94 to RolfeDog.

SamDog eked out his first league century by trying to run both himself and Fats out before reaching the milestone with a deft edge for four off Skippy Marsh who congratulated him with a fist punch. This Gilet noted, was the first time such a friendly gesture had ever been made by an Australian bowler to a centurion since Shane Warne said "Well batted Freddie" to Flintoff at Edgbaston in 2005. Freddie's innings was on a Thursday however, so SamDog's was even better in Gilet's view and Gilet had to be revived with a Tommy Cooper gag.

SamDog went on to 132 including one large straight six, until the moment that his father decided he should film a few shots for austerity, or is it posterity, whereupon the very next ball he hit one off Ben Ackland Snow hard to deep extra cover where he was caught. I see from looking at the scoresheet, that the catcher was somehow also Ben Ackland Snow which only goes to prove that the said individual has solved the conundrum of space and time. Having mastered Quantum Physics he has apparently now turned his attention to Accountancy to which he has brought his knowledge of time and space to

improve the Faster Payments system and with any luck will stop my money disappearing down a black hole which is the problem with Quantum Physics.

That paragraph contained two long sentences.

Gilet observed that this was the first time a left-handed 'keeper-captain had ever made 132 for The Ridge. At Sandford.

Fielding is hard work against a big total but SSM stuck to their task although there was one unfortunate moment when BAS made a sliding boundary stop only to propel the ball over the line with both knees in the aforementioned practised-manoevre. The words "baby giraffe" were muttered by one of the awaiting Ridge batsmen, probably Ben Hillarious and an investigation is under way into this example of bad manners which is usually the domain of BirdDog.

Talking of BirdDog, he said: "We don't really miss Geoff Tombs do we?" Everyone else agreed then talked about him for half an hour.

Fats had been sent in as a token right hander and he and Junaid kept up the momentum despite their general reluctance to run. Junaid it seems, runs on his toes and being quite a big chap made me think of an Amazing Dancing Bear. Junaid made 28 and Fats 20 before Brooksie (26no) – who is always up for a little asterisk -was joined by Allan (10no) and took the total to a Ridge record breaking 382-5 with Skippy ending with three wickets for SMM.

Tea was excellent and included Carrot Cake (Roz take please note) but despite this it took a lot to prize away Statto-Gilet from the scoreboard, the computer and all those records. Astonishingly on this bright Summer's day it began to rain – potentially our fourth rained-off fixture – but happily after a short while BAS's face reappeared again from the clouds and we were OK.

SSM's priority was to get a full five bonus points. Cooperman - who I learned on the way home is a Thespian (or as they say in Spain, a "Thethpian" – ask me Birdy) on his return became the first RidgeBear to open the bowling with a man-bun and after a while induced a catch from Ben Taylor, snaffled by Allan who for once caught the ball without any unnecessary falling over.

During Martin Anson and John Springer's second wicket partnership of 68 the traffic lights in SSM turned green somewhere and a long line of cars arrived. This was the returning SSM 1st X1 who were encouraged by the sight of the

score at 50-1 on the scoreboard with a target of only 77. Unfortunately the 77 was the Duckworth Lewis par-score for this particular over (there being a hint of rain about) and the D/L score grew by increasing margins during the afternoon.

Cooperman's first eight overs went for 1-29 and Junaid's first six, 0-32. Ben Hillarious eventually bowled Martin Ansom (pronounced 'Handsome') for 24. John Springer was joined by Skippy Marsh and they put on 80 while Gilet-Statto bowled another mean but wicketless spell there being a league conspiracy not to get out to him.

Eventually Springer knicked-off behind, caught SamDog bowled Allan bringing someone called Derek Hoebrugger to the wicket, a name that just reeks of intellect and The Ridge immediately felt insecure. It was a long time before Hillarious bowled him in his second spell for 43 with the score 241-4 and five batting bonus points in the bag.

It only remained for BAS to fall to a fine diving catch by SamDog and while BAS hung around for a moment while the decision was confirmed we witnessed the unusual sight of the batsman's teammates on the boundary telling him to get off which he did without complaint or throwing his bat, or smashing anything.

SSM ended on 274-5 with Skippy making a cultured 85no, not something you can often say about an Australian.

Both teams had a Bird who did not bat, bowl or even fly (BenGod has a car that can fly FFS) and BirdDog got the Thanks for Coming Award this week ahead of RolfeDog who was credited with Ben's 94 of course. Among SSM's did-not-bat batsmen was Fred Lamb who was spared from slaughter.

The computer programme produced more scorer's delights:

Junaid bowled 40 dot balls, Gilet 42 and Cooperman was wedged in the middle with 41. Statto took 0-38 off 10, Junaid 1-63 and Hilarious 2-63. We won the other match by only bowling 30 wides against SSM's 57 which we generously did not applaud. In fact not only are we promoted we are the Wides Champions for the whole of the Cherwell League with 292 to date and we have done pretty well with 62 no balls too. A total of 354 extra deliveries means we have already bowled an additional match.

Availability for next week was checked and is a revolving door: SamDog would be in Corsica; Brooksie would be somewhere abroad too but not Corsica; Fats would be away; Hillarious was working; Cooperman would be chopping wood on holiday in Dorset (in a kibbutz we suspect). But we'd get Hamsah, and Matt Brightwell back in a remake of Bollywood meets Hollywood, plus Captain Dakeseye, RolfeDog (fresh from a day's holiday in Sandford St Martin), not to mention Lloyd (God help us).

SSM may have been struggling in Div 2 but all their players know how to enjoy themselves and were particularly generous in congratulating us on our season's success, something we milked for all that it was worth. And thank you for the beer, Ben Proctor.

Their clubhouse became quiet however for a rather serious matter. A Hearing commenced over a written allegation of unacceptable behaviour against one of their players. How serious was it? The presence of Skippy in the public gallery made it feel like a Kangaroo court.

The allegation was read with gravitas by senior player Simon Smith. Smith looked around in vain for support from his Amazing Dancing Bear (The Alan Price Set, 1967) but Junaid was already halfway home with Allan. A fair-haired cricketer known to belong to SSM but as yet unidentified stood accused by Panel Umpire, Anton Saverimuttu - who was present as Witness for the Prosecution - of removing Anton's belongings from his seat in a public hostelry some time during the previous winter and worse, taking over that seat for the rest of the evening.

He might have got away with it. He might have stayed straight-faced and successfully dobbed one of his fair-haired mates, or even a ginger. He might have kept the truth to himself. As it was, it was soul-destroying to see Tom Goffe (3-0-17-0 v Oxford II, fairly respectable) crumble abjectly in the face of the thinnest of evidence presented by Simon 'no Dancing Bear' Smith (1.5-0-15-0 v Oxford II, completely useless), like a child who had had his big fingers in the cookie tin.

He blurted out: "It Wasn't Me..." (Shaggy, 1999) "...honest, it's just a ShaggyDog story" and as his face turned from pale to crimson he was formally identified by Anton and in a particularly sad example of complete mental disintegration, Thomas Goffe, of no fixed address in the batting order, made a full and heart-rending confession so that the case for the Defence crumbled.

To think that the Prosecutor (Smith) and the accused (Goffe) had bowled together in tandem only recently in their famous Duckworth-Lewis victory over Wolverton.

Goffe looked around in vain for Duckworth or Lewis but neither were there to help him having also cadged a lift home with Allan and Junaid and so Goffe was condemned to drink a yard of ale, or that length which he did not spill, bare-chested in full view of the public gallery.

Ever-generous even in the most trying of times, several RidgeBears quietly advised him never to play a game at Bledlow Ridge. The Red Kites which circle the ground in search of carrion have given up on SamDog on the basis that what meat there is would be impossible to get off the bone. Goffe's carcass on the other hand, has just enough about it to feed a small family of scavengers for a week and Bledlow Ridge CC's Public Liability Insurance does not extend to convicted criminals.

I have seen cricketers dressed in horse-riding gear after cricket at Horley, I have watched a player run naked around the ground with a stuffed donkey for company at Eynsham and have now witnessed the total humiliation of a Fixture secretary at Sandford St Martin. It almost makes Bledlow Ridge seem civilised, (were it not for the presence of BirdDog).

We left to a Guard of Honour and made our way home.

We had answered so many questions: *We could* win without Dakes; we *did* win promotion; we *could* find Sandford St Martin; Tom Goffe, is the fairest of them all (and the most guilty); we learnt that Quantum Physics is just Faster Payments for Bright People; Ben Ackland Snow is an Accountant living in Peckham; Ben Keeping was not, not-available.

Only one unanswered question remains: who is the best-looking RidgeBear? With Hamsah, Hollywood and RolfeDog back next week, it's going to be a tight contest, regardless of whether or not BenDog shows up.

We'll get Hermione to decide.

This is a story of fiction and any resemblance to real cricketers is purely accidental