

Bledlow Ridge 1s v Aston Rowant 3s

Saturday 24th August 2019 – Away

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Dakes is Back – The Useless Tosser

It's Never Over Till It's Over, But It Is What It Is

Ridge One Boundary Short in Big Run-Chase

Aston Rowant	-332-4 (50 overs)
BRCC	- 328-7 (50 overs)

Result: Lost by 4 runs

The Aston Rowant second pitch is stationed beyond the main pitch, where a troupe of Vaudeville clowns, some dressed in black and some dressed in blue, was playing cricket with an orange. They all had large numbers on the backs of their shirts, presumably so that all those spectators who had bought match programmes could use these as a guide to see who their heroes were. This required, of course, that each player concerned would be facing the opposite way at the apposite moment (ask me Birdy). I couldn't find a programme.

There were no match programmes for BRCC 1s v Rowant 3s, not even a pavilion, or hut. We changed in a small marquee, a luxury not afforded the home side who changed in the clubhouse and walked over. Had we known, we could have arrived earlier and cooked breakfast, using the floor of the marquee to fry bacon and eggs. If he'd known the marquee doubled as an oven, no doubt Fats would have arrived earlier than usual. As it was, he changed alone in the pavilion cheerful in the belief he was the first to arrive, before wandering over to the second pitch surprised to find his teammates who were melting in the marquee.

Dakes, the Useless Tosser that he is, called wrongly and we were condemned to field first on a day forecast to reach 30 degrees.

It didn't go terribly well. Rowant opener Mark Walker had evidently scored 47 runs in 10 matches this season but he chose this day to stride down the wicket to our opening bowlers and time the ball like Gower in his pomp through and over the covers and mid-off. It is fair to say that Gower was a little more sartorial in appearance and Walker has ruined my theory that you can only be a good cricketer if you look your best. He hardly put a foot wrong though and the chances such as they came were only offered up at the other end, at

least until he was past his 100. When he reached it he almost celebrated in Wayne Tyas' bat-throwing style but mercifully without actually letting go of the handle.

Remarkably Dakes, Cooperman and Gilet all went wicketless. Dakes' ankle was not good (or he was the first to suss how hot it was) and so we were not as potent as we usually are up front. Cooperman hustled Leigh Lewis (not to be confused with either Lennox Lewis or Leona Lewis, no offence meant to any of them) several times, beating the bat and hitting the body, but any luck that was going was not on our side.

By the time Gilet replaced Cooperman, with Shaun already bowling in place of Dakes, the heat was beginning to take its toll and we were diving over the odd ball in the field. It was not until Brooksie replaced Shaun in a comedy turn, that Lewis chipped one up in the air towards cover. Who should be fielding there other than The Greatest Mid-Off in the World who had been misplaced and was now back-peddalling frantically up the hill in pursuit of a catch that only a 6' 5" man would aspire to. Where was Hugo anyway? The GM-O it W managed it by defying gravity to take the catch one-handed high above his head and behind him, in a kind of reverse Fosbury Flop.

Naturally he ended up completely prone which is his default position, both legs and the one hand with the ball temporarily raised in the air, as in a game of Dead Ants.

At 130 for no wicket with the temperature rising, Shaun had commented that he had had no idea that playing for the 1s was so much fun. The fun continued as Walker moved towards a deserved 100 while off Gilet's bowling in particular, we added some overthrows to the occasional mistimed dive.

Eventually Hollywood replaced Brooksie at the top end and bowled to the young and interestingly named William Senior which made me wonder what his father is known as? It can't be William Junior as that would be reserved for a younger brother. I can't think of what is more senior than Senior so the jury is open. I once played a match in which the Major family, father and two sons, were recorded as Major Major, Major Minor and Major Minimi. That was around the time that a scorer in another match erroneously recorded Tom Overthrow (yes really! – a name derived from West Country wrestling) as Tom Overdraft. "The bowler's Holding the batsman's Willey" is second division in comparison.

Anyway, Hollywood got Senior out even though he was the Junior Partner. What happens if William Senior ever becomes Junior Partner in a law firm. Does his CV say "Senior Junior Partner"? Perhaps we will never know, which would be a shame.

I really did not realise that playing in the 1s could be that much fun.

Back at the match with the score somewhere around 200-2 we were really back in it (!). Centurion Mark Walker – for some reason known to his mates as Roddy (Roddy McDowall? Roddy Doyle? no offence to anyone called Roddy) - was by now batting in a logo'd T-shirt and got the name Shoddy Roddy (not to be confused with Showaddywaddy), from RolfeDog who was by now having a fit. Fortunately, Shoddy Roddy did not turn his cap the wrong way

round as RolfeDog might have disappeared into a hole in the ground for ever. Finally Shaun dragged Roddy out of his crease for Alex to stump him sharply for 133.

Fats replaced Gilet up the hill and the old steam train had to chuff hard but Birdy clung on to one from Duncan Holt. Of no interest to anyone but RolfeDog, the steam trains of the North Norfolk Railway (not to be confused with North Norfolk Digital, no offence meant to either of them) stop at Holt station, so Fats' train noises and Holt's departure seemed rather appropriate. To RolfeDog.

With four down and only 260-odd on the board, Rowant were clearly struggling. They ground their way to 332-4 off 50 overs with Paul Plumridge and Jamie Revill getting to 51no and 30no respectively in quick time. Glad to say we only sent down 37 wides this week. There were no maiden overs, or for that matter no maidens over, until that is, Penny arrived to watch. The nearest we came to the former was an over from each of Dakes and Fats with no runs off the bat but with one wide. Otherwise the bowling figures were not particularly flattering although Gilet's 0-50 off 10 should be mitigated by the inclusion of something approaching 20 runs in overthrows and misfields.

Tea was in another marquee, this one a bit cooler. Rowant are evidently big on marquees.

The nowadays-beardless Captain Dakeseye set about the Rowant attack, conscious of the large target, while RolfeDog watched from the other end. The man Dakin is back. No diffidence now. Encouraged by his rapid 30 the previous week, Dakeseye gave the opening bowlers the charge, hitting over and through extra cover or cutting square.

He was soon the recipient of a head-high full toss so the next ball was a free hit. "Don't forget you can be run out off a free hit" warned RolfeDog. Dakes nicked the ball to the keeper and took a step out of the crease and the keeper' threw the ball at the stumps but missed. As Dakes had hit the ball he would have been run out. The bowler politely asked the umpire why he was not out caught and the umpire reminded him it was a free-hit. Everyone's honour was upheld.

RolfeDog for his part, proudly played out the first maiden of the day, trying to work out Fossie's pace or mysterious lack of it, before being trapped by it and adjudged for 18.

Dakeseye was already nearing 50 and was joined by Alex, the two Captains batting together as someone so wittily pointed out. Gilet perhaps? Surely not. Captain Perry straight drove with military precision while Captain Dakeseye hit the only six of the day as if demolishing a fish finger.

Eventually he succumbed, both to the heat and to a catch by William Senior - perhaps he borrowed his father's name - for 78 at a strike rate of 121.88, not that anyone cares (except Gilet).

Middsy's 23 was followed by Hollywell's rapid 26 off 16 balls at a strike rate of 162.50 - if anyone cares.

Despite all this, the required strike rate was creeping slowly up as boundaries were hard to achieve partly due to the presence of five fielders patrolling the outfield including Mark Walker who still had the energy to tear about after his 133. Had we been a bit sharper we would have realised rather sooner that only four were permitted outside the fielding circle up to Over No 40 – a lesson for us next time.

It was soon time for those old farts Brooks and Bird to bat together but not before Fats' brief cameo which ended up in a stumping which was even slower than Fats' attempt to get back after refuelling at Holt station.

About 90 were required off 10, a Big Ask but it is not over until it's over especially if there are a few wides. For those of you reading this in the year 2045, this was the day before Stokes' amazing performance in the Headingly Test to win against all the odds. Brooksie and BirdDog almost did it as well, BirdDog placing the ball and hobbling a la Max Wall while Brooksie yelled "yeeeeess" and ran up and down in the manner of Groucho Marx chasing a waiter. Time for a remake of The Odd Couple.

Shaun joined BirdDog after Brooksie was dropped but then run out by keeper Jamie Revall who doesn't miss twice, for a rapid 39. With the last full toss being hit for four by BirdDog we fell just four runs short of victory. Disappointing, but as BirdDog said many times "It is what it is" and he got a nice little 36 red-inker.

A fine game played in fine spirit. For our part we should have saved more in the field but the effort and the run chase could not be faulted. Nor could the resilience of the two umpires who stood out all day in searing heat. Well before the end of the match, all those who had been playing cricket with an orange on the other ground, came to watch the match; several ladies too, meaning that we did at least have a few more maidens over, (albeit no maiden overs). Thankfully none of them had numbers on their back, and they had eaten the orange.

No girls were offended in the making of this Match report – except Brooksie possibly