

Bledlow Ridge 1s v Didcot 2s

Saturday 20th July – Away

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Junaid Lands Three Hefty Blows and One More on Gilet

Captain Dakes Suspected of Serving Dodgy Burgers

The Ridge Almost Get Lift-Off But Fail to Touch Down

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BRCC: 155ao (47 overs)

Didcot 159-8 (49 overs)

Result: BRCC lost by 2 wickets

Yes, almost 50 years to the day since Neil Armstrong took a stride nearly as long as Hugo's, The Ridge had a chance to make a lunar landing of their own but fell just short of the intended landing area.

It is not often that the merits of batting out the full complement of overs is so starkly illustrated as in this narrow defeat to Didcot. The pressure created by another 15 or 20 runs and by offering the opposition six less overs in which to do so, would have proved critical. As it was The Ridge appeared to be cruising to victory with Didcot on 101-7 but for the third time in recent weeks could not finish off the job.

This was a fine and exciting game as low scoring games often are. The match and the aftermath had its comedy moments and featured the debut of our new Rambo-lookalike bowler. More of that later.

Dakes had to make some tough selection calls. Cooperman had emerged from the jungle and Alex was available, so something had to give. It was The Landlord who missed out. Yes, Lord Wells gave way to his Lodger, Hugo. It was a narrow call and you don't get much narrower than Hugo unless you are RolfeDog.

There were repercussions in the Wells' household of course: The Lodger was locked in his room with no hot water, and plates were thrown about, that sort of thing. There were benefits for The Landlord in being dropped after top-scoring however, in that he was playing at home. He did not have to go to Didcot Parkway which is roughly where Didcot CC's new ground has been constructed, in the middle of a Huge housing development. Regrettably the three kilns which form The Didcot Power Station, and which give the area its character, are due to be demolished in August. Probably by a throw from Junaid (see later).

The journey went well until a key country road was blocked off. The diversion took us to a remote level-crossing where, memorably, three years ago RolfeDog and Brooksie performed U-Turns in amongst the traffic queuing to get across. This time there was no queue, only a buzzer to alert the signalman to our plight and an instruction to wait five minutes until he got out of bed and lifted the gates. This occurred quicker than expected and in no time at all we were changing in Cell Block 5 of the new pavilion. Alex proudly showed off his new bat which he had collected in the morning and expressed concern that it had no bat face protective cover.

Fortunately he will be able to put one on to his clean bat because, 50 years to the day since Apollo 11 landed on the moon, Alex got his second first-baller in a row. What are the chances of that?

The innings followed a simple formula. RolfeDog blocked while Keeps and Jai batted, albeit briefly. "4 runs off 40 balls" announced Gilet gleefully on WhatsApp as RolfeDog, who so far had spent the afternoon in a Sea of Tranquillity, was joined by The Lodger.

With his stride, Hugo could never have landed on the moon and said: "That's one small step for man" unless he was inventing Fake News.

As it happened, at the beginning of his innings his feet hardly moved at all. This is because when you are as tall as Hugo, the air is quite thin and it takes a while for the oxygen to get all parts moving. So it was that he lulled Didcot's bowlers into complacency before taking a deep breath, advancing down the track and launching Kieran Beesley over extra cover (not literally) and then depositing one of Umang Goel's balls into the car park (at least that is how it felt to Umang!). You'd have thought that after that, Umang would have bowled some 'no balls' but he didn't, although his predicament may explain the surfeit of goo(g)lies.

Having almost got the ball into orbit and accelerated the scoring with some sharp running, Hugo The Lodger came down to earth with a bumpy landing. His attempt at lift-off against the Meesley Beesley was unsuccessful this time and Hugo left for a short while in quarantine with 32 to his name. He had made splash though and the score, which had been barely 65-3 at half way was looking much better at 103-4 with 20 overs to go.

At the other end RolfeDog had virtually blasted off and just as Gilet was about to send out a derogatory WhatsApp, he realised that the aforementioned had translated 4 off 40 balls into 50 from 101. But RolfeDog got impatient and came crashing down to earth with a poor shot and departed for 62 at 129-5.

Where was Major Tom when you needed him? Sitting on a Tin Can perhaps? We were soon scuttled and our mission aborted as we lost our last five wicket for 26 runs. This included the inevitable "RunOut Sacrifice of Cooperman" as Brooksie tried to farm the strike but only succeeded in dispensing with Cooperman and giving it to Gilet. Out first ball, Gilet was delighted that his batting was on a par with Alex and managed to get off the pitch, get his pads off and get upstairs to tuck into tea before anyone else had moved.

We made such a fine start in the field that we began to wonder 'Is there life on Mars?' 22-4 after a superb spell by Junaid who took three wickets and Dakes, one. Junaid's included firstly a terrific diving catch by Cooperman who operates best when entirely horizontal, and secondly the prize wicket of skipper Sam Couldrick who is averaging a zillion this year. Later in the match Cooperman managed to retrieve a ball that had gone to the boundary and ended up completely prone for no apparent reason, but possibly due to the temporary failure of his landing gear.

Enter Gilet instead of Junaid. After a couple of balls and in a desperate act of retaliation Junaid threw the ball in powerfully such that it pitched short of the bowler's wicket and "literally" took off like a moon rocket.

It landed just above Gilet's right eye. Gilet lost all power and rapidly succumbed to the pull of the earth's gravity.

Didcot CC's emergency task force leapt into action. It took about ten minutes to sort him out with a combination of ice, water and rocket fuel. A Didcot player with a first aid box, said he would give him an eye-pad. This was the boost Gilet needed. He made an immediate and dramatic recovery and asked what functionality it would have.

The answer was a thick cotton pad and lots of bandage. What I suspect started as a Didcot joke, ended with Gilet resembling a slightly portly edition of Rambo, replete with bandana. Fortunately as he had not been hit on the arms or legs, he continued bowling and exerted pressure on the batsman so that we took three more wickets at the other end as Cooperman terrorised the Didcot middle order. Cooperman threatened to start singing and took two wickets, then when HollyWell caught a skier to remove Beesley for 55 with the score at 101-7 we seemed poised to re-enter the earth's atmosphere.

Somehow Andy Griffiths survived a blast from BrightWood who replaced Cooperman (who had probably fallen on the ground) before turning on the afterburners and taking his team home. Our only other reward was a late wicket for Gilet from another skier, caught this time by Junaid who promptly threw the ball as hard as he could at Gilet's bandage.

Just kidding.

Gilet's figures of 2 for only 37 off 17 was, some said, a fine performance by someone who had taken a heavy blow to the head and by others as a clear indication of how to get the best out of him in the future.

Somehow we had failed to complete our mission having all but beaten the team that now moved to the top of the Division. We are playing well but not ramming home our advantage often enough.

There is a special feature in the on-line scorecard summary that enables whoever uploads the information, to nominate a Man of the Match. This was awarded to Kieran Beesley who had added 55 runs to his 3-60 off 15.5 overs. With 2-37 off 17 and the Drama Queen Performance of a lifetime, Gilet was unlucky not to get it. But then it was not *his* wife or

girlfriend who submitted the scores! Note to Gilet: Nathalie needs to take up scoring, forget about the girlfriend.

Some of us took up Dakes' invitation for a barbie at his house just a few minutes' drive away.

His house is easily identifiable as the only thatched cottage in an avenue of genteel bungalows. It has been roofed entirely out of Dakes' beard.

When RolfeDog arrived, Keeps was showing early signs of Post Traumatic Stress. He had come back out to inspect his rather grubby Tesla on the advice of The Lodger who said he had spotted a nasty scratch.

Keeps couldn't believe it. "I've *just* traded it in for a 400-mile version, this one only does 250 miles and I've already ordered the extra cable".

Keeps and RolfeDog agreed that The Lodger was not the sort of person to make up something like that and on entering Dakes' garden were greeted by The Lodger who was wearing a large smirk.

Keeps needed some time on his own, so went on a tour of the house. He returned to say that he had opened a cupboard (what *was* he looking for?!) and a cat, which it turned out had been shut in there all day, ran out. On further inspection Dakes announced that he had also crapped in the cupboard which gave rise to a potential misunderstanding, and I must say it did look like one of Ben's.

Needless to say, Gilet consumed burgers as if he had had no tea and we all compared weights. The Lodger weighs 12st with RolfeDog 11st 4lbs not far away; how then, can The Lodger hit a cricket ball into the next village while RolfeDog cannot get it off the square? Gilet proudly announced he was 17st and ate a few more burgers, bringing him up to 17st 2lbs. If I could remember what Hollywood's weight was, I'd embarrass him; it was definitely greater than Keeps whose weight exceeds the permitted amount for an investment banker under financial trading regulations even when he has emptied his pockets of cash.

Cooperman announced he would be putting on a musical show at the club next Friday night including some 'light' music to keep his weight down. He also said he was a fraction taller than whatever height The Lodger claims he is, so we all ate a few more burgers to celebrate.

Eventually we made our ways home, RolfeDog taking both Cooperman and The Lodger just to prove it can be done without modifying a vehicle.

Gilet, who had been hit hard on the head with a cricket ball, who had then bowled 17 consecutive overs and who had later consumed Dakes' supply of burgers, spent much of the next day in hospital with a bad headache, dizziness and vomiting. All this, 50 years since man landed a modified vehicle on the moon (what are the chances of that?). The CT scan (unsurprisingly) found nothing at all: clearly some of the burgers had been a bit dodgy.

Chuka Umunna is away playing scrabble