

Thame 4 vs BRCC 2

Saturday 22nd June

League to pull in UXB squad to defuse Thame pitch

The Real Saint continues top batting form

Angell 3 makes debut with wicket maiden

Thame 4 108-10 (44.3 overs)

BRCC 111-8 (36.2 overs)

Ridge win by 2 wickets

After the recent monsoon conditions in Bucks, we finally got 3 consecutive days of sun prior to this match and with the temperature soaring into the mid 20s, the prospect of another green top seemed rather more remote and green it was not! There was some black, some grey and a sort of mottled camouflage pattern throughout. It frankly looked horrible and Sniff won another important toss and had no hesitation in putting them in.

As it turned out, looks flattered to deceive. It was nowhere near as good as horrible. Sufiyan and Taggart opened up and after 10 overs, Thame had scrambled up to 12-0. Doesn't sound a lot, but given that the ball was seaming square and exploding off a length, it was something of a miracle that they had put a bat on anything. Both bowlers had created all sorts of problems by bowling little more than line and length and to be fair the batsmen had looked terrified of the pitch from the start and had barely played a shot in anger. In the 11th Sufi induced a thin edge to Jovan who took a sharp catch and this brought Charlie Anderson to the wicket. He showed a little more intent and hoiked Taggart to cow for 2 before trying to repeat the shot to a fuller ball that swung a bit and he dragged it on.

Inbetween these 2, we had seen the debut bowling performance of the third and youngest of the band of Angells, Taj. First ball was good, second ball was better, swung a bit and castled the other opener. He continued with a very tidy over and finished with a wicket maiden. Unfortunately Taj got a bit excited after that and became a bit erratic, eventually going for 28 off his 4, but it was nonetheless a very encouraging start from yet another of the U14 age group.

Not going for runs wasn't complicated, but getting wickets a little more so. You could pitch it on a length on the off stump as often as you liked, but there was no telling whether it would seam away dramatically, bounce over the batsman's head or hit him on the helmet (which we did 6 times with absolutely no intent).

Taggart induced a catch to Doug at mid off before making way for Shaky, who got better as he bowled and also picked up a couple. At the other end a Saint had taken over from an Angell, which seemed like a technical downgrade, but proceeded to bowl a miserly 9 overs for just 12, picking up another. Riz had pulled off one easy catch and one much more difficult one.

With 7 down and having had a quick look at the incoming batsman, Taggart was now furiously whirling his arms in an attempt to convince the skipper that it was time to bring back an opener to polish off the tail. Sniff agreed, but decided to bring Sufiyan on at the top end and whirled away with Doug at the other.

It turned out to be a fairly inspired piece of captaincy as Sufi blew away 2 batsmen. Taggart did get a come back to bowl the penultimate over and induced a simple catch off young Max Muncaster, by far the most impressive of Thame's batsmen, to probably the safest pair of hands in the team (after Deadly Doug), Dave Maunder, who dropped it.

There was no real harm done (other than to Taggart's figures) however as Sufi cleaned him up 4 balls later to finish with impressive figures of 4-18.

As we left the field, Sniff explained to Taggart that he had not wanted to bring him back for too long as he was going to be opening the batting. A generous gesture considering the United Nations anti land mine commission had just begun an inspection of the pitch.

Any hopes that the half hour tea break and some more sun would turn the pitch into a benign road were quickly dashed as the first few overs produced much drama, a few bruises and not too many runs.

Taggart was stoic in defence, but watched helplessly as he lost Chesh, Jovan, Dave Maunder and Doug at the other end to a combination of dodgy pitch and dodgy shots (we'll spare blushes by not attributing).

When he went for 20 a few balls after the first drinks break, we were 41-5 and 109 looked a long way off. But not for the first time this season, the entrance of the Real Saint marked a turning point. The opening bowlers had established that anything pitching within 12 feet of the batsman was a lottery delivery, however the change bowlers decided to test out the middle of the pitch. The bounce here was still erratic, but much more 'tennis ball' type. Being a sport that TRS is very familiar with, this suited him rather well and realizing that his time may be short, he crashed 8 4s in a match winning 43 from 52 balls. He had been joined by Sniff after Riz's early departure, who was taking ugly runs to a new level, but nevertheless accumulated 20 of them unbeaten. TRS fell to a top edge off a full toss and after a scratchy 3 from Shaky, Taj survived a couple of nervous balls before Sniff finally got hold of one to finish the game.

The match was played in an excellent spirit and Thame provided an umpire who did both ends throughout both innings, which was a real luxury, but this strip is really not acceptable for cricket at a level where there will be youngsters playing. Unless it is improved dramatically, allowing league cricket to continue on this ground is going to get someone seriously hurt.