

BLEDLow RIDGE 1s v CHALLOW & CHILDREY 2s

Home – Saturday 5th September

Gilet Steams as Ridge Defeat Challow

Shorty in 'Takes Two Wickets Shock'

RAJ takes 5 Wickets and Swallows the Match Ball

BRCC: 228-6 (40 overs)

C&C CC: 110ao (24.3 overs)

Result: BRCC won by 110 runs

This wouldn't have been a particularly funny day without Gilet who failed to take a wicket for the first time (probably) since 10 overs 0-11 at Eynsham two years ago. I don't remember that anyone dropped a catch off him in that match in 2018 but we managed another two against Challow plus a stumping, to add to the three catches the week before so at least we got a laugh out of the day.

I have been looking down our teamsheet for someone called Fred. Can't see who it is. Perhaps Gilet is just not good at names. Anyway, he kept saying For Fred's Sake every time an opportunity was shelled and one can only assume he has something against this name. Perhaps someone called Fred once nicked his mobile phone.

Challow arrived with a Callow X1. It was a relief eventually to see someone aged over 20 file on to the outfield but he turned out to be the umpire.

It wasn't until 3 wickets had fallen for 91 (Wells 18, RAJ 6, Fats 14) that things began to get going. Some double bouncers from Thomas Hannaby generated some interest and RolfeDog increased his career output from Free Hits to 2 off 5 attempts. Dakes started to smack it everywhere for six, slightly outscoring RolfeDog who fell at 135 for 41 having gone in first.

By this time Shorty had ended his photographic assignation which involved taking photos of the cricket with a lens the size of an elephant's trunk. It also involved standing in front of the sightscreens at both ends which must be a tradition in Hertfordshire. Or Leicestershire. Or Northamptonshire. Or Rutland. Rutland is what they call a "landlocked county" which only goes to show.

When Brooksie was surprisingly bowled for 2 the fun started.

Shorty came in to join 16-year-old Shaun “Shorty” Dryden and together they thwacked the ball around and ran and called in what was a particularly loud partnership. On the boundary edge RAJ couldn’t believe that anyone still doing his GCSEs could hit a six like Shaun did over the off side. Perhaps Shaun can do this because he is going out with the Bucks Coach’s daughter, even though he seems a bit young for that sort of hanky-panky.

Shaun Shorty and Shorty Shorty made 41 and 32, both not out, respectively, cruelly denying Cooperman and debutant Sufi, the chance to bat. If Gilet has to bat it means that someone else has to score so we try never to go 9 down. We ended on 228 for 6 and Gilet could not remember the last time this had happened.

Tea went off without incident even though BlrdDog was around and RolfeDog only found one empty can of coke in his kitbag. The tension mounted in anticipation of a new opening bowling unit. Who would it be?

Cooperman and Sufi! It could be the title of a 1960s detective series or perhaps a spice option on a takeaway menu. In fact, this was the youngest opening bowling partnership for the 1s since Taggart was a child. On further investigation it appears that Taggart was born at the age of 32 and never was a child: Cooperman and Sufi’s age combined still give Taggart 18 years to spare.

Anyway “Cooperman and Sufi”. What were the chances of that? Back in 2016 it seemed that Dakes and Taggart ruled the world. Some things you’d never foresee. I mean imagine back then that Donald Trump and Boris Johnson would hold the highest offices in their respective countries. That would never happen of course, but here we were in the last league match of 2020 opening the bowling with Cooperman and Sufi, the youngest opening partnership for The Ridge since Queen Victoria sat on the throne. She sat on the throne for a very long time, though not for as long as Birdy at Cublington a few years ago after a very hot curry and a bit of wind the night before. Queen Victoria has nothing on Birdy (even if the rest of us have).

Cooperman found himself as senior bowler. Sufi – as is the ill-fortune of a debutant at The Ridge - was forced by Cooperman to bowl up the slope, into the wind and with his bootlaces tied together. (Was that your work BirdDog?).

Who would get the first wicket? Would it be the Buddy Holly impressionist NO! IT WAS SUFI! **Ben Cox b Sufiyan Ahmed 13**. And with this dismissal Gilet’s bowling career took a step backwards. Or rather a small hop backwards, because Sufi’s celebratory skip down the wicket knocked Gilet’s celebratory hop, whenever he takes a wicket, into a cocked hat, whatever that is.

There was a loud cheer from the boundary. Yes, Junaid and another brother who was not Hamsah, were taking time off from beating Sufi up, to support him. “I told them *not* to come” said Sufi, “At least my sister’s not here, she beats me up the most”.

Planning to field at short-leg, RolfeDog called to BirdDog on the boundary asking him to fetch RolfeDog's helmet from the boot of his car. It was a straightforward task. There was a thank you card for Birdy for being a World-Beating (thank you Boris) Pain in the Ass, to be presented after the match, on the front seat. BirdDog would not need to go near it though so nothing could go wrong.

By the time RAJ replaced Cooperman who was dry roasted by this time, he was soon beating *himself* up as Sufi went 2-0 up with a fabulous one-handed caught and bowled above his head from a firm return drive. Sufi did a double skip and Gilet could be seen practising dance moves as the next batsman came in.

Sufi took pity on RAJ and let him have the third wicket, that of Justin Penrose who had managed 7 out of a total of 61. (Sound like anyone we know?). 61 was not Challow's lucky number and RAJ nailed Jo Durie LBW first Ball. Someone said Jo Durie had reached the quarter-finals of the Wimbledon Ladies tournament in 1984 and had even beaten Stefi Graf, whoever she was.

An over later an even more remarkable thing happened with the score still on 61. Dakes The Sloth, moved a few feet and took a catch. Off Sufi. Sufi was leading the wicket-taking 3-2 when RAJ imposed the 6-over Statue of Limitations on Sufi and Sufi's spell had to come to an end. Figures of 6-0-27-3, or 6-1-15-3 if you take away the odd no ball and the free hit that David Alder had almost deposited in the tennis courts. Where Jo Durie wasn't playing.

The score was now 63 with five wickets down. RAJ took advantage of his partner's absence and bowled Marc Gregory for 0. He was making the most of Gilet's ill luck at the other end.

Fielding in the deep, Gilet had by now perfected an improved celebratory hop to include a tap dance routine and was keen to put it into practice. His teammates however were in no mood to see Gilet dance and continued where they had left off the previous week... shelling chances.

Instead of hopping or dancing, Gilet began to steam. He continued to steam as RAJ got his fourth courtesy of a sharp catch by Brookies in the slips, which Brooksie followed with his traditional effort to throw the ball in celebration, over the boundary. He nearly managed it from 65 yards and Jo Durie who was by now playing tennis, kindly returned it.

Dakes declined a catch at mid-off off Gilet blaming the sun, or the moon, or one of the planets - Uranus probably – but whatever it was, Gilet's planets were not aligned and his moondance was put on hold. And then, some Comedy Gold Blend. Watched by mum, Sheila, Bryn and Robin, ie even more supporters than had turned out for Sufi, Cooperman actually tried performing Gilet's new dance routine as the ball approached him in the air at mid-off.

By a miracle of science Cooperman stayed upright, but that might explain why the two-handed catching chance was shelled one-handed, much to the merry amusement of his fan club and to the exasperation of the bowler. You've guessed it: this was Gilet. "For Fred's Sake" muttered Gilet in reference to Fred Astaire who once did a nice little line in tap-dancing. Cooperman for his part could not believe he had spilled the beans, so to speak.

The players' interest turned from "Will anyone ever take a catch off Gilet" to "Will Shorty ever get a batsman out who is over 12 years of age? He didn't risk a comment like "that was the best ball I've bowled today", knowing that Brooksie was on hand to lengthen this time period to days, weeks or even months.

By this time, James Smith batting at six was putting up some resistance. Gilet noted that he had caught three of our players out and wished he had been on our side. Batting with a heavy limp for some reason (had he tripped over one of RAJ's old headbands?) he was smashing it. But Smith had reckoned without Dakes whose stars had realigned so that he was not staring into the moon any more and caught him off RAJ to give RAJ his first club five-fer whereupon Sufi beat him up. 104-8.

Eventually and extraordinarily, Wellsy stumped Blake Bint off Shorty and when asked how old Blake is. Their umpire replied: "Twelve years old". Cue mirth. No one could see the stumping because of the steam coming out of Gilet's ears.

Wellsy – who must be ShortCake's best friend – then caught Ross Gray who was at least 15, off the bowling of ShortBread and it was all too much. RAJ had five but ShortHand had two, and there was a fight for possession of the match ball which RAJ narrowly won.

It transpired we had been bowling with a Hampton, rather than an official league ball, and this was the trophy which RAJ proudly swallowed in his excitement. We had won by 110 runs, RAJ 4-0-27-5 and Shorty 3.3-1-5-2. Gilet with 6-0-22-0 looked quite ill.

Post-match there were two short presentations. Firstly, Jimmy Lovebite was presented with a case of Fosters which RolfeDog had kept in the boot of his car. It turned out that that this case now contained two blankets and no cans of lager. FFS! RolfeDog had given Birdy ***one simple task*** earlier: to open a car boot, pick up a helmet and close the boot again. Five seconds and simples. **No. He. Couldn't. Even. Do. That.**

A second presentation followed in which BirdDog was presented with a card and a gift from all the players in recognition for his being such a child all season.

The bar was opened outside – this being the year of Covid – and the evening began to deteriorate. "Have you been sweating Rolfey" asked Carrie whose 18th birthday we were celebrating. "Yes, I've been playing cricket, Carrie" he replied. "Well you stink" said Carrie.

FFS!

We celebrated Carrie's 18th with some smashing cakes while ShortWave reflected that he had not had the chance to bowl at Carrie before she had reached the age of 12. Shaun on the other hand just sang some rude songs about his sister.

Songs?

Cooperman was by now in full Buddy Holly mode. He was however knocked into a tin hat (whatever that is) by Fats and then by RAJ who will surely take Ben Keeping's mantle as The Worst Karaoke Singer Ever. Mids showed real talent holding a mobile phone so the singers (sic) could read the words. Maybe Gilet has a successor.

Some of us including Birdy (aka BirdDog) ended the season by retiring for a curry.

No doubt Birdy with his gift from the players, felt like a king. And no doubt too he spent the following day on the throne.

King Vajiralongkorn lives in Thailand and was unavailable for a curry