

BLEDLow RIDGE 1s v DINTON 2s – Away

Saturday 22nd August 2020

Headband-Less Ridge Win Low Score Encounter

Gilet in Quick Singles Scandal Wells in Strike Rate Disaster

BRCC: 126ao (38 overs)

Dinton CC: 119ao (38 overs)

Result: Won by 7 runs (40 over match)

Many years ago, High Wycombe CC used to run a prestigious Single Wicket Competition on the last Sunday of each season. This was usually won by a good all-rounder. One year an out-and-out bowler, coincidentally (for all those who played at The Ridge in the years leading up to 2007) named Binnie, reached the final by making scores of between only 2 and 5 all afternoon. It was confidently predicted that in the final he would make a duck and that his opponent would lose by somehow making less than 0.

In the event this did not happen but The Ridge 1st team is beginning to adopt a similar approach to defeating Dinton 2s.

Last year we struggled to 156 and Dinton made 79 in reply. This year Cooperman said the pitch looked like a Flat White but RolfeDog predicted it would be a bit Frappé, so in the spirit of HWCC's Single Wicket competitions we thought we would set Dinton a lower target this year than last and see how they got on with that.

Our innings started with RolfeDog seeing off Hamsah in a run-out fiasco before RolfeDog and The New Major (Perry) experienced a career first.

RolfeDog could only count 10 members of the opposition at the start of an over and was informed that one fielder had left the field to pray.

Conveniently this was the slip fielder and RolfeDog obliged by edging a delivery neatly past where he would have been standing. A little afterwards however, The New Major (TNM) tried the same trick but he did not realise that prayer-time was

over and that the vacant slip position had been filled where Mohammad Ilyas neatly took the slip catch.

The power of prayer is rarely realised so soon and repeated so quickly. Soon afterwards, at the other end, RolfeDog swung at a half-tracker which grubbed low to the ground and somehow edged it slowly towards second slip, where the same fielder nonchalantly took the catch and RolfeDog went off to meet his maker.

Hugo was left wondering at other end why his arrival at the crease always coincides with RolfeDog's departure. It's nothing personal. Hugo was joined not for the first time by his landlord Wells, who momentarily forgot where *he* was and asked Hugo what was for dinner.

They both looked for pies, but these were few and far between on a wicket that started low and then got lower still. While Wells *waited* at the other end, Hugo *munched* three boundaries before he was caught behind off the bowling of Yathushigan Kulatheepan who wins this year's prize for the longest name without a hyphen. Hugo's score of 15 looked like a match-winner at that stage of the game.

Not long afterwards RAJ misjudged the bounce of a short ball in the sense that he thought there would be some, and was bowled, and soon afterwards Captain Dakeseye also missed a straight one from Jake Wilkinson. He was out for 0, nought, zilch, and while this might have been a match-winning score in a 1970s Single Wicket Competition final, on this occasion the scorers were not troubled.

We were now staring down the barrel at 71-6. Out strode Brooksie, all hustle and bustle and Groucho Marx and he joined Wellsy, while RolfeDog was now standing as Dinton's *umpire-in-absentia* at the other end to Umpire Graham.

It was with enormous satisfaction that RolfeDog was soon able to no-ball Kiri Jayanathan for a rare back-foot misdemeanour and signal a free-hit.

On the boundary edge, Gilet announced that this was probably the first time this had happened in a league match during a pandemic since 1919 and possibly at all, assuming cricket had definitely not been invented before The Great Plague of 1665.

Contrary to popular opinion RolfeDog does not recall either event first-hand but he did have a hand in the next boundary which Wellsy meted out as punishment for the free hit, by smashing the ball past extra cover.

With the score at 101, Wellsy became the third batsman to be bowled in succession and our seventh dismissal in total. With 16 off 69 balls he had a strike rate for all ages, of 23.19, comfortably the lowest of the team on the day, with the exception of Captain DakesEye of course, who sadly had no strike rate at all, ha ha.

This also made Wellsy even more of a friend to RolfeDog. Last year the latter had been pilloried on WhatsApp for his 28 in 113 balls when the league's umpire even

saw fit to comment critically from the other end that “you’ve been batting all afternoon” as if that was an offence. 28 in 113 is a strike rate of 24.8. Just saying. Hope (though not much) arrived at the crease in the unlikely form of Peter Short, aka Shorty, whose *nom-de-plume* is Pierre du Petit (ask me Birdy).

At the other end Brooksie had been having no problem at all and in hitting four boundaries (joint top for the day) he couldn’t see what all the fuss was about. Until Kiri J bowled a wide half volley that is and Brooksie was caught at gully, for 16 off 20 balls which Gilet thumped into his calculator and came up with a SR of 80.00.

Out strode Cooperman to join Shorty du Petit. By this stage the emphasis was on height. Cooperman reminded himself not to set off for a run just because he had hit the ball and surprised himself and others with a fine straight drive for four. A similar but aerial attempt resulted in a catch at mid-on by Jamie Law who at full stretch was able to display on the front of his shirt, sponsorship from the nearby Bottle and Glass hostelry, a pub which “never disappoints” according to one enthusiastic customer on TripAdvisor.

In sharp contrast Cooperman left the field as disappointed as someone who wasn’t enjoying The Bottle and Glass could be, and how much more disappointing can it get, to know you are being replaced at the crease by Gilet?

One day Gilet will walk out to bat holding his mobile phone as well as a bat (as opposed to Bob Willis who once went out to bat without a bat at all) but this time he arrived with great purpose and in a fit of irony gave Peter du Short a shorty lecture on the benefits of running, calling and looking for quick singles.

Shorty pinched himself and confirmed he was not dreaming. They hit and ran. Gilet pushed at mid-off and ran and got in easily. Has he been kidding us all these years?! Finally, on the last ball of the 38th over Pierre du Short decided it was necessary to protect Gilet from the strike and brought off a neat reverse sweep, perfect in every way barring contact with the ball which made its way to the off stump. Shortbread, bowled for 9, declared himself “happy with that”. Gilet for his part almost suffered an algorithm on realising he had a red-inker to his name.

As if by magic, when we went out to field, a second umpire appeared. “Asif By Magic” was the wonderful newspaper headline the day following Kent’s victory over Worcestershire at Lords in the 1973 Benson and Hedges Cup (yes, ciggie-sponsorship was allowed in those days) when dashing allrounder Asif Iqbal won the MoM award.

No one playing at Dinton would have remembered that but Dinton was the beneficiary here just as Kent had been at Lords, where, if I remember, Kent had not had to provide their own umpire for *any* of the match.

Cooperman somehow got the first ball well above stump high and Daniel Ripley hit it for four which must have pleased his sponsors The Bottle and Glass, no end. RAJ

rattled Ripley's timbers however with an inswinger when the score was 25. Despite the advertising, this wicket was no shirt-front (geddit?).

After RAJ and Cooperman had made the batsmen smell the coffee for a while, they were replaced by Gilet and Hamsah. Gilet struck first with an LBW and then off the spin of Hamsah, Thomas Maciejewski, Dinton's answer to Paul Brzezicki, had to leave the field because he was caught short. Not in the way RolfeDog is occasionally at his age, but in a manner which showed in the book as:

Thomas Maciejewski: Caught Short, Bowled Hamsah – 8

Just as in our innings, a mix-up in the field led to a run out, this one courtesy of Hugo's strong throw, making the score 57-4 leaving 70 wanted with 6 wickets left.

It should be said that The New Major's parents are beginning to follow their son around in the distant hope he might eventually entertain them with the bat. In that respect they are to his batting what Mrs Thatcher was to the mining industry, but they do seem to bring the best out of his wicketkeeping. When Gilet dragged Al Humzah out of his crease TNM did the rest so fast that he had the bails back on again before the batsman could get in. TNM then repeated the act off Hamsah, while Gilet was calculating his bowling average to see whether his burgeoning batting average might one day exceed his bowling average and qualify him as an all-rounder and potential Single Wicket Competition winner.

Talking of averages, after bowling James Law he ended with 8-3-15-3 and for the second match in a row (last match was 3-30) Gilet came up with a bowling average that did not require the help of a pocket calculator, which spoils the fun really.

64-7 and time for Norty Shorty. He whirled away at Jake Wilkinson and 'keeper Harry Morris. Dinton's sponsors embrace both the leisure and health industries. The Bottle and Glass gave way to a Nuffield Health shirt whose sponsorship may have had a remedial nature. This in turn was followed by Morris' "Medical Tax (UK) Ltd" garment; presumably they had come along at some time or other to ensure all Nuffield's medical dues were paid.

In a fiery Espresso return spell Cooperman put Wilkinson to the sword (geddit?) with an LBW which was better Latte than never, as Dinton were creeping towards victory. At 94-8 the game could go either way.

It is a worrying thing that in this Covid season featuring the England Alice Band X1, The Ridge suddenly has no headband of any description, Hugo having had his hair cut without permission and RAJ having lost his bandana which is probably inside the missing club cap. By way of distinction however, Cooperman has developed a woolly mane and now resembles a modern-day Bob Willis albeit more Buddy Holly than Bob Dylan in musical taste.

Harry Morris was compiling the highest individual score of the day which coincidentally – and who does not like coincidences? – was 28, the same top score as last year. Fifteen to win off five with Morris at the crease. RAJ was by now bowling with the wind which is one way of putting it. Shorty almost claimed a victim after bowling a no-ball when he served up a long-hop for the free-hit with Wellsy standing about 5 yards away. Dakes then decided to replace Shorty on the basis that one way or another a whirligig action might win it for us.

He got Raghav LBW, making the score 112-9 but in his next over Dakes lost his radar. One can only hope for a better sense of direction during next week's walking holiday in Snowdonia. The game became a competition to see if we could win it with a wicket before Captain DakesEye lost it with wides.

When Dakes extracted the fourth LBW of the innings we had won by seven runs and Dakes finished with the remarkable figures of 2-0-8-2 including five wides, about which Gilet went into meltdown.

Gilet also concluded that with those bowling figures and 0 for the day, Captain DakesEye no longer qualifies as the team's all-rounder. With a batting average for the day of infinity and a bowling average of 5, this mantle Gilet announced, has now passed to him.

Watch out for a 70s-style Single Wicket Competition Revival.

Gavin Williamson was unavailable for comment

Postscript

Dakes announced that in his absence next week the team would be captained by Hugo and vice-captained by his butler, Wellsy, in a team to be known as The Tractormen. Headbands may be compulsory.