

BLEDLOW RIDGE 2s v STOKENCHURCH 2s – Away

Saturday 25th July 2020

Ridge 2s in Shirts-Tucked-In and White-Shoes Shock

Rain-Affected Cricket Match Interrupts Jovan's South of England Tour

Stokenchurch CC – about 65-1

Result: Match Abandoned – Rain

Stokenchurch's ground is quite small and is bordered on two sides by an access road for local residents whose houses overlook the pitch and who serve as an early warning system for Travellers. It is generally thought wise not to park in the few parking spots alongside the pavilion at square leg.

This did not deter Tombsy who after carefully manoeuvring into place learned he had to move his car to the small car park in the nearby allotment, to make way for gazebos which the Stokey players were trying to piece together as a sort of Crystal Maze challenge.

"I never have liked this place" said Geoff cheerfully as he drove off to park among the turnips.

Talking of turnips, at least half an hour before the scheduled start, Jovan had stopped for a pie at the petrol station in Stokenchurch which backs on to the cricket ground. His subsequent journey into High Wycombe in search of the ground is hard to explain, His Sat-Nav took the blame for this of course, although someone did say that if he had asked the person at the till they would have said 'the cricket ground is behind that wall'.

Jov's next mistake was to park in another slot well known as a favourite for batsmen who like to pepper parked vehicles. Our scorebook remained in his car.

Schniff won the toss and elected to field, it being a rain-threatening day. By now we were lined up beneath the narrow overhang at the front of the pavilion while Stokey revelled in the luxury of two gazebos placed on tarmac.

Sshhnhiffe asked Lewy Miller if he bowled. "Not really" (we know that he does). Sshhnhiffe asked Lewy if he keeps wicket. "Not really" (we know that he does). Just before Sshhnhiffe could ask the third question someone noticed that the covers had been removed and the team took off for some energetic warming up.

Thus it was that before the game actually began, we were scattered over various parts of the ground. Snipph called the team to the boundary where to their surprise they were introduced to “The Club Captain”. No, not “Rolfey”, or “RolfeDog”, or “Grandad” (which would have been untrue) but “The Club Captain” (TCC) the title of a Great Officer of Bledlow Ridge CC.

The Club Captain administered a brief dissertation on the virtues of dressing not only in club colours but with shirt tucked in (of course) and white shoes. It was hard to tell who was more shocked: the team at these extraordinary demands, or TCC at the reverence shown – a kind of stunned admiration and respect for an elder, quite at odds with his standing with members of the 1st team.

Two players were singled out for wearing black and grey shoes respectively, but miraculously they had been changed to white ones by the end of the first rain break which begs the question why you would turn up to cricket with cricket shoes but not wear them.

Anyway, after a general fumbling which resulted in 11 tucked-in shirts we took the field and Ben Hillarious took the new ball. The umpire was Perfect Pete Langford of Stokey and Bucks O60s fame. He was able to watch as Hillarious’ first delivery landed nicely on a length as did the second which brought about a coincidence.

In our pre-season friendly last year Gary Murton was caught by our wicketkeeper off the second ball of the match. Gary Murton has scored several million run in in the history of the Cherwell League putting him right up there with Middsy except that Gary is better looking.

This time he was caught at first slip off the thumb despite a minor intervention by Jovan’s glove, which presumably knocked it into RolfeDog’s hands.

Thereafter 19 year-old opener Sam Leppard feasted on a succession of large pies from Hillarious whose impressive range varied from the straight pie to the gentle pie, the lobbed pie and the away-swinging pie, few of which troubled the surface of the pitch and none of which were anything like any of the pies available at the petrol station which had been responsible for Jov’s earlier navigational crisis.

“It’s very difficult to find a length, bowling down the hill” said Geoff.

At the other end Sufi was – it seems – experimenting with an impressive range of run-ups which spanned anything from seven paces to fourteen, the longest of which, for no apparent reason, included a dainty hop, a la Dakin, and it was at this moment we began to suspect he was going through a series of impressions of the rest of the club’s bowlers.

“It’s not easy bowling uphill” said Geoff.

Two of Sufi’s best deliveries were respectively smacked straight for four and lifted effortlessly over the leg side for six. Rarely can anyone batting with his long shirt not tucked in, and moving his feet so little, have timed the ball so sweetly.

His bat had no labels but Geoff did his research and reported that “It’s a Stuart Surridge: never did like Stuart Surridge”.

Then Persnickety Pete reminded the batsmen Leppard and 15-year-old Finlay Murton that non-strikers should run along the tramlines two metres parallel to the pitch. Clearly they had not been listening –Def Leppard? (geddit?).

Patient Pete called the first sanitiser break, which gave us time to reflect. As a result, Ben Hillarious’ pies were replaced with Tom Miller’s leg spin. And very good too. After one early boundary he put the brakes on quite nicely until some rain came and RolfeDog was able, from the safety of the pavilion edge, to give a dissertation on how water generally runs downhill and that it is helpful if the hoses attached to the covers are also laid out to run downhill.

We also reflected on a piece of fielding where unluckily for Geoff the ball did not reach the boundary and he had to go up about five gears to retrieve the ball.

“I never could field on this ground” said Geoff.

Two debates followed as it drizzled. Firstly, an investigation into the origin of Schnipf’s nickname. The same Father & Big Helper at the Club who has said there is currently more chance of Pole Dancing than an Open Bar at the club on Friday nights, has told Sufi that the nickname derives from a flirtation with illegal substances, an accusation which Sufi seemed to have bought completely and from which the Shnifathon was keen to disassociate himself.

Secondly Geoff expressed disappointment that his bat had not been returned from repair and could he borrow RolfeDog’s spare which then disappeared into Geoff’s bag.

Persistent Pete organised removal of the covers and the downhill hoses and Tom resumed very tidily as did Sufi now. The score which had been at one time 50-1 off about 6 overs progressed to roughly 65-1 off about 12 when the Real Rain came and ended the afternoon’s activity.

We learned that the 1s were still playing until they reached 169-2 off 17 overs (which is no way to play cricket) and that Gorgeous George had been bowled by a young lady, not the first time apparently, he has been given his marching orders by a girl.

This seemed as good a time as any for Jovan to get the scorebook out of his car and he set off for goodness-knows-where via Stokey’s petrol station; the last we heard he had just passed Wolverhampton on his way back to London.

The Miller boys said that they would be delighted to play *any* time as long as they were not otherwise engaged playing rugby, six-a-side football, kayaking, or – for all we know – pole dancing.

Finally, Geoff arrived in front of the pavilion in his BMW which he had collected from the allotment car park. He put his twin indicators on, put his kit in its boot, and remarked to RolfeDog: “OK if I keep your bat for a couple of weeks, John?”, and drove off before Gary Murton could give him a parking ticket.