

BLEMLOW RIDGE CC v HETAIROI CC

Sunday 26th July 2020

The Ridge Almost Defeated by Occupational Hazards

The Hetairoi Refuse to Leave the Pitch for Tea

Farrier Puts the Wind up Oboist

BRCC: 230-5 dec

The Hetairoi: 204-7

Result: Match Drawn

“**Where** do they come from?” asked someone about The Hetairoi.

It is almost an impossible question to ask of a Wandering team. That is because they wander, rather like Ben Hillarious does in the field.

I played for The Hetairoi for quite a while with teammates from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Australia and New Zealand ... and an adoptive Brazilian.

They like travelling too. I once took a bowler off with the explanation that a teammate who had made his way from Norfolk for the match deserved a good bowl, only to learn later that the first bowler had driven down from Scotland for the game.

And you never know what you are getting when you play a Wandering side.

Their membership includes the Head of Philosophy at Leeds University, a Life Coach, various Authors, Charlie Stubbs of Coronation Street, the MD of an International Book Publisher, a Fine Art Dealer, the son of the army's former General Chief of Staff who later became Constable of the Tower of London (the father that is). A former Championship level professional footballer turned out once, while high powered Accountants, Investment Bankers and Underwriters are commonplace. We have just *one* Investment Banker at The Ridge and we all think the sun shines out of his vault.

A regular Hetairoi century maker gave up a potentially stellar law career in London to become an expert in Armenian Studies specialising in the years 500 to 1100 CE (well frankly,

the other years are a waste of time). They used to have a canny off-spinner who was a boxing promoter who also ran a sports shop in Paddington from where he sold replica guns. They were bought by young men from the East (from parts of Asia rather than from Southwark or Barking) because they made a loud 'pop' (the guns not the easterners).

There was a barrister (now known as a 'Silk') who bowled left-arm and who worked on behalf of George Michael when Michael took on Sony in the 1990s, and who more latterly has represented the likes of David Beckham and Bob Geldof. He once gave me out caught even though he couldn't see the catch, because as the umpire of a teammate he thought it was the "right thing to do". Happily, I managed to run him out a year later.

In fairness we had a barrister for a while. At least so it seemed. Cooperman was so pleased to have got a job as a barrister and to have been excused all the exams, but when he turned up at The Apple Orchard in West Wycombe, what they wanted was a barista not a barrister. He was happy to accept because both occupations produce about the same amount of froth, and as it turns out, the job in WW offers a few ...erm... unexpected but welcome additional benefits.

Sarfraz Nawaz (177 wickets in 55 tests for Pakistan including a 9-55 against Australia) turned out for The Hetairoi once, as did Ed Giddins, 12 wickets at 20 in four tests for England. Giddins though, was perhaps better known for getting banned from first-class cricket for cocaine-use, then for betting against his own county (he wasn't playing in the match) and least controversially of all, was then banned for throwing (cricket balls not matches). Not even Brezza has managed any of those.

Hetairois marry mathematical geniuses or the daughters of High Court judges, or ladies who become Chairman of BBC Symphony Chorus.

Last year The Hetairoi opened the batting with a Lord who works in finance. Well so do we sometimes I suppose but while ours bought his Lordship at a cut-price jumble sale, their's is the Real Deal. "I don't *work* in the House of Lords" he once corrected me "I *serve* in the House of Lords"!

I have looked at their member's list and astonishingly they have a Hugo Bashall – is there something you have not been telling us Hugo?

Our own Motley Crew gradually assembled, including Shorty who had come all the way from Malta. We gathered in the spaces allocated us, a white gazebo for them and a green one for us. "Good areas" said RAJ on seeing them, taking the opportunity to get in a bit of practice. (RAJ being our adoptive Indian, with connections to royalty of course).

"What do *you* do for a living Ben?" someone asked Hillarious. "I work for the Ambulance Service saving lives" replied Hillarious, as he took a long drag on a cigarette.

RolfeDog delivered a brief lecture on Timed Cricket to a sea of mostly baffled faces and explained the unlikely concept of having to bowl a team out to win a match. Imagine it's a

Test Match with just one innings and – erm – without a crowd, this being the Year of the Pandemic.

Shorty said he didn't like timed games and that he would umpire with Umpire Graham but only by standing at square leg. I didn't argue - you don't want to make the Maltese cross.

We won the toss, elected to bat and opened with two hazardous occupations, David Saint (Trainee Bookkeeper) and Robert Armstrong-Jones (Painter/Decorator, albeit by Royal Appointment). Will Fryer bowled the first over. Will has just finished studying PPE at Oxford. "Do they run courses in Personal Protective Equipment there?" asked our resident NHS mask-wearing expert, Ambulance service man, Hillarious.

God help us.

The second was bowled by William Ball, a Professional Musician (Oboist for Hire) who nearly took the wind out of our Painter/Decorator with a few that swung ... and who doesn't like a musician who swings it? (Was there an oboist in 70s prog rock band "*Curved Air*"?!)

Captain Rolfe was by now in the Naughty Corner (another Good Area) on account of allocating the wrong ball, The Hetairoi having brought their own which they should have bowled with. Unfortunately, ours bent around corners and there is a joke to be discovered about Ball bowling with the wrong new ball but so far it has eluded me.

The Real Saint and RAJ amassed 43 before Shorty got into the game. Encouraged by the sight of The Real Saint moving across his stumps, Shorty had decided he would like to stand at the bowler's end after all and triumphantly adjudged TRS lbw; the trip from Malta was worth it for this alone.

Dave Wells (Computer Operator) joined RAJ and negotiated some chin music (geddit?) from Will Ball and reached 21 when, with the score at 86, Ollie Fryer who was responsible for bringing two other Hetairoi into the world and to this match (along with Sarah of course), himself came on to bowl, and trialled a long hop which Wellsy smashed off the back foot.

Never trust a wandering team. Sometimes they pretend to be slow in the field but if you smash a long hop hard and low it is quite possible that someone called Henry Wilman will dive full length and catch it. Thus it was that Wellsy trudged off and was replaced by Charley Farley (Professional Genius).

On the boundary edge we struggled to establish who was the senior partner at the wicket.

"Do you know my hair looks nice in this headband?" asked RAJ loudly between overs ...
"No, but if you hum it, I'll play it" said Will Ball.

All that coaching was paying off and RAJ reached his maiden club fifty while Charley Farley was steadily accumulating at the other end.

“Should I be playing forward or back to Henry Wilman” asked RAJ, “Yes” replied Charley, got on with his game and even left a ball he never saw.

RAJ had so far coped with two Fryers, a Ball, a Willman and a Slade. He also pulled off a master stroke by taking a single, watching the ball go for four overthrows (total 5 runs) then remaining at the batsman’s end to face the next ball.

Now he was getting near to a hundred. The word got out and Steve Bird (Retired Carpet Cleaner) arrived hurriedly at the ground to join Middsy (Water Softener Salesman) who had brought a good deal of liquid refreshment in case Paul Brzezicki (Senior Carpenter) appeared as well.

And then: **IT** Happened.

Stephen Matthews— who with his surname knows a bit about turkeys and rabbits – lobbed up a pie. There was over sixty years of experience in the making of this pie. Years of cunning, craft, gravy and guile has enabled Matthews to spot a rabbit at 22 yards. Our favourite Painter/Decorator’s eyes lit up at the snack dangled in front of him; so excited was he that he ran past it and to the dismay of all RAJ supporters, Neal Thathapudi executed a difficult stumping and then ate the pie.

RAJ returned to a ‘raptorous’ reception for his 90, this being a ground where the Red Kites circle overhead, and thanks to one of life’s great coincidences Hugo Bashall went out to bat. Was he playing for us or for them we wondered? Shorty was not prepared to find out, and as he was by now nicely warmed up, when Matthews lobbed another one up on to Hugo’s pads, Shorty did the rest.

Out came Brooksie. It was clear in this instance who was the senior partner: Charley Farley (Genius) is from a family of famous Architects while Brooksie (Technical Drawings) merely provides “Architectural Services”.

“You call and I’ll run” said Brooksie. “I know that one” said Will Ball.

When Brooksie had 15, Matthews tried another recipe. It should be said at this stage that the aforesaid Matthews is not part of the Matthews Turkey family; I pretended he was a few paragraphs above for the sake of a good gag. In truth his family owns a flour mill at Shipton-under-Wychwood (who doesn’t?) though never should it be said that any of the people of Shipton are in bread. Moreover it is possible that some of the aforementioned turkeys end up inside Stephen’s pastry.

The truth is, that Matthews *ground Brooksie down*, and bowled him off his pads with a *run-of-the-mill* delivery, Brooksie being a *gluten for punishment*. *I’m on a roll said Matthews* who chuckled as he likes *a good loaf*.

And so it was with Charley Farley now into the 40s that Ginger Tom Hickey (Professional Delinquent) came out to join him.

Charley was in a race against the declaration to make 50, so Ginger Tom, sensing some fun, blocked out five balls in a row. Charley got to 48 not out, when that miseryguts RolfeDog – who once declared with a teammate on 96no - said “enough’s enough” and declared.

This prompted an outburst from The Hetairoi who love fielding and they refused to move. The name Mike Price was even mentioned (see me after). In a neat ending to the innings Charley Farley obliged by hitting the next ball from Charley Fryer (see the link there?) over backward point for 6 and we returned to our “Good Areas” for tea.

The Ridge regathered. We had to have a good start, so Robert Armstrong-Jones came in off his full surname and The Hetairoi trembled at the thought that they had not brought a single hyphen with them.

As always John Ball (Underwriter) and Mike Penington (Venture Capitalist) set off by blitzing the offside off the bowling of RAJ and Sufi (Genius II). After a good while the fielders began to grasp the concept of having fielders where the batsmen least like them rather than spread out across the ground and stopped wandering, that being what the opposition was supposed to do.

Eventually John Ball was out for 28 in an unlikely manner for two reasons: firstly he played a leg glance and secondly, our ‘keeper Wellsy dived and took an exceptional left-handed catch. At that moment Lord Lucan rode by on Shergar and Boris cancelled HS2.

This was off the bowling of Ben Hillarious who then achieved the near-impossible by extracting an LBW decision from his dad for the first time ever.

Shorty had a whirl and pronounced one particular delivery as “the first good ball I have bowled today”. “You mean ‘the first good ball in *two weeks*’ “said Brooksie never being one to miss a scoring opportunity.

When Hillarious bowled Penington shortly afterwards for 19 the score had gone from 70-0 to 74-3. Henry Wilman (Data Scientist) came in to join Dom Laurie at the crease and Hillarious ended with 3-16 off 7, quite a turnaround after the series of turkey pies he had delivered at Stokenchurch the day before.

Now, Dominic Laurie does a *proper* job: he is a Business Broadcast Journalist. Beat that. He appears on television to tell us how useless economists are, among his many other roles, and if that were not inspiring enough, he once won Celebrity Mastermind with his specialist subject: The London Underground.

He hit some boundaries to the sound of ecstatic cheering from his 3-year-old son but then his innings went down The Tube when he received a ball on the Metropolitan Line but played down the Bakerloo Line and he was caught by Shorty off the bowling of Charley Farley.

You couldn’t make this stuff up.

By now the Data Scientist had analysed the bowling and was threatening to win the game on his own, taking particular pleasure in peppering The Real Saint at Short Fine Leg. Out came the Oboist who had once orchestrated victory in this fixture with Henry at the other end.

He had reckoned without our occupational masterstroke. The Oboist was facing a Farrier, a bowler with a proper job. The Oboist adanté'd down the wicket, determined to give the Farrier a good shoeing but he skied his first ball in the direction of Delinquent Tom who snaffled the catch and declared the music over.

Delinquent Tom was rewarded with bowling an over and was so accurate he found the middle of the Data Scientist's bat a number of times, thus encouraging The Hetairoi in their quest for victory.

Now, it was impossible to get the Farrier (1-21 off 7) out of the game. Charlie lobbed one up and Henry couldn't quite clear The Tallest Farrier in the World, about 70 yards away at deep mid-wicket and with the Data Scientist's dismissal for a rapid 78, went Hetairoi's chances, especially as Charlie then bowled Brian Slade first ball.

Despite the best efforts of RAJ at the end, the Hetairoi had a Consultant to the TV Film Industry in Ollie Fryer with whom to play out a draw and take the credits (geddit?), a draw being a result you sometimes get in timed matches. The Hetairoi ended on 204-7 with Charlie taking 3-46.

The Fryers would have stayed for a Fry-up but our Chefs (Nat and Jolly Hale) have not been seen for a while. Will Fryer wondered Philosophically whether an oboe played in a forest really makes a sound and Hugo said that a horse would be able to hear it even if it didn't. Our assembly of Painter/Decorators, Computer Operators, Senior Carpenters and Trainee Accountants had certainly been defeated off the pitch by Underwriters, Venture Capitalists Oboists and Data Scientists.

Next year, if we plan well enough ahead, we will select The Lord of Bledlow and the soon-to-be-anointed Major Perry. That will give Dom Laurie something to talk about on BBC Breakfast.

Lord Botham (Winetaster) was unavailable for comment

