

Match Report
Bledlow Ridge 2s vs Chalgrove

Saturday 12th June

**Return of the Midds overshadowed by
the return of the Guv'ner**

Chesh continues 'expert skill and judgement' to
lead Fantasy League

BRCC 2 295-3

Chalgrove 83 ao

Ridge win by 212 runs

At midday on Saturday, this was a top of the table clash, with Chalgrove being our nearest challengers and just 18 points behind us, meaning a low scoring loss could potentially topple us as league leaders. With skipper Sniff on sabbatical, it was Chesh who went out to toss and on winning had little hesitation in opting for first use of the wicket.

The last time Bledlow Ridge and Chalgrove were in the same league structure, Martin Middleton would have been in his pomp, scoring runs for fun and galloping his way up the CCL all time run scorers list. Things have been a little quieter for him in the intervening 12 or so years, but as the first ball of the innings came down as a bit of a loopy full toss and disappeared to the boundary, time seemed to roll back. There were 8 more boundaries and 4 singles before he ran a 2, at which point he was on 42, (Chesh at the other end was on (hang on while I count these up) ... 5), and he offered up a catch to mid-off. Not a dolly, but definitely catchable, but it went through the fielders' hands and raced off to the boundary. Chesh made a note.

The day kind of went downhill for Chalgrove from there. At the first drinks break (15 overs), the pair had put on 87. By the second one (30 overs) Midds had offered up another (admittedly, more difficult, but also noted by Chesh) chance, but the pair were still together and had added another 97. The faint ripple of applause in the 23rd over had been to mark Chesh's score exceeding the overs total and from there he started to open up a bit as well, but this was all about the Midds. The full tosses were bludgeoned to the fence, anything on leg stump was whipped viciously through mid-

wicket à la Middleton of old and despite the very warm conditions, as the innings progressed, there were quick singles, 1s turned into 2s and the run rate seldom dropped below 5.

During the second drinks break, Taggart had approached the skipper and suggested we look at a pinch hitter at the fall of the wicket, if it ever came. His proposal was Junaid.

“Hmm, Junaid, yes he’s in my team”

“Well of course he’s in your team, he wouldn’t be here if he wasn’t”

“Ohhh, **this** team? Yes I see what you mean. Yes, definitely Junaid”

Fats, who had originally been slated at number 3 and had been sitting with his pads on for 30 overs salivating about the prospect of a second successive 50, harrumphed a little bit and went to make his mum a cup of tea.

When the stand had got to a record breaking 218, Chesh final nicked off for 61, an innings that was the perfect foil to Midds and in went Junaid who promptly ran himself out. Well I say promptly, it certainly wasn’t very long after he went in, but in the interim he smashed 4 6s, 3 fours and a couple of actual runs to take the total up to 291.

One ball prior to the run out, Chesh had decided that he didn’t need 300 and was going to declare after the next over (with Midds currently 146 having given his final (noted by Chesh) chance). He didn’t want to advertise this fact to the opposition, so devised a cunning plan and grabbed a bottle of water. He walked on to the pitch waving the bottle and shouting to Midds that he had a drink for him. There followed a conversation conducted from 40 yards distant at a volume that made it audible at Bledlow Village.

“Don’t bother, don’t need it”

“Yes you do”

“It’s not a problem, don’t worry about it”

“You **definitely** need this”

“Why? I thought we were declaring after this over”

Oh well, best laid plans.

Jovan went in at the non-strikers end and watched Midds crash his 21st 4 to rack up 150 exactly. This was met with enthusiastic applause from the BRCC gazebo and generous applause and several personal fist bumps from a weary, but very sporting fielding side. Jovan then watched him take a leading edge off the next ball and get caught at mid on and walked off saying something about the productivity of his innings. Fats was less than sympathetic, “Least you got a bat” and got a clip round the ear from his mum.

Watching a team flay you around the park for just shy of 300 is never an ideal preparation for batting, but Chalgrove came out looking determined to make something of the match rather than try to block out. Taggart had suggested to the skipper that as there was little need for a strangle on runs, perhaps we should open with the shock kids, Hillary and Hickey.

“No Tags, I definitely want you to open. You’re in my team”

“Well of course I’m in your team. I wouldn’t be here otherwise”

“What? “Ohhh, **this** team? Yes I see what you mean. Nope, definitely you to open”

And so it was that on the second ball of the second over that Taggart brought about the most significant comeback at the Ridge in decades. The Guv’ner had a decision to make. Yes, he was back, after the best part of 10 years away, Malcolm Ashby was back in whites and standing on the pitch at the Ridge. It was a huge appeal for leg before, supported by debutante wicket keeper, Toby and the whole slip cordon. A grin spread across The Guv’ner’s face, one that has struck fear into the hearts of war veterans and he looked Taggart in the eye and said.....

Not out.

Two balls later, a repeat. This time much fuller, bang in front. Surely.

Same grin, but just as he caught Taggart’s eye, the head moved Chucky doll style towards the batsman. The poor chap went white as a sheet and was almost relieved to hear,

Oh yes. That’s out.

The Guv’ner was back and had one!

In the fifth over Jovan took off from second slip and sprinted to short third man taking a fantastic over the shoulder catch to give Hilarious his first wicket, and at the end of the sixth, Taggart started an 8 ball sequence that cost 2 runs and took 3 more and at 21-5 that was just about that.

Shorty came on for a few, knocked over the resilient Sam Saunders who top scored with 24, and then took a sharp return catch to pick up a second. Around this time Chesh approached the now slightly hobbling Taggart.

“Need to get Fats on. He didn’t bat and he’s the captain”

“What are you talking about, **you’re** the captain”

“What? “Ohhh, **this** team? Yes I see what you mean. Yes, but let’s give Fats a bowl anyway”

A wicket and a maiden seemed to do the job and with Hickey threatening an email from his dad about a double DNB, he got on for 1, bowled some slop but got the last man and a resounding victory was complete.

Some of the Chalgrove boys hung around for a beer (some of them started at the drinks break) and there were more congratulations offered to Midds. Chesh was having a chat with the three lads that had dropped Middsy and giving them what I presume were commiseration cards in some hastily rummaged up brown envelopes. Nice touch skip.

As I approached to congratulate him on his own innings and a game well skippered, I interrupted a phone call. Some bloke called Viktor and apparently it would definitely look like it happened on Wednesday. Not sure what that was about.

And so the sense of time slip was back. We sat in the sun, Middsy had made a big ton and the Guv’ner was regaling us with tales of air shows and bonfires. For a moment there it was 2001, but the present rattled back as talk turned to the now inevitable fantasy league. We chuckled about how Chesh was probably not going to be top now without Midds in his team.

“Midds **is** in my team. Transferred him in on Wednesday. All the logs will show that I transferred him in on Wednesday and **NO-ONE** will be able to prove otherwise.”

Good Call Skip