

## **BRCC 1<sup>st</sup> XI v Stokenchurch 1<sup>st</sup> XI**

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2021 (Friendly)

**Ridge Lose Despite Dakes' Shock First Straight Ball**

### **RAJ narrowly misses Man of the Match Award**

**Hugo and Charlie in Run Out Spectacular**

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BRCC: 186-9 (45 overs)

Stokenchurch CC: 190-7 (28 overs)

**Result:** Lost by 3 wickets

"We've got to bring on the youngsters next season, even if it means opening with them" said Birdy in September, October, November, December (short break over Christmas), January, February and March.

On 17<sup>th</sup> April, 98 year-old RolfeDog walked out to bat at home v Stokenchurch 1s with 49 year-old Mike Winson, at about the time 50-year-old Birdy walked out to bat at Stokey with 3 year-old James Dow. Clearly there had been a last-minute change of emphasis in favour of a mentoring policy and so it was that RolfeDog was there to nurture Mike through difficult moments in the same way that Birdy was going to do for James.

Dave North was Master of Ceremonies (as umpire) for the day. Dave has made a spectacular recovery from recent illness and is clearly not going to waste a moment of the summer. He extravagantly signalled a wide first ball of the match from Joe Sears, a privilege usually afforded to Dakes on *his* first delivery of the season. Well his first four actually.

Mike hit three flashing back foot boundaries through square cover off the same type of delivery outside the off stump that RolfeDog was leaving, not wanting to use them all up and deprive the younger player. At Stokenchurch, James was generously giving Birdy the strike while the rest of his team was giving him the bird (geddit?) and Birdy was dragging everything to the midwicket boundary.

At home, we had bought two expensive gazebos but decided not to use them, sending Stokey off to make camp under the trees or what's left of them. RAJ settled down to a quiet afternoon: "Isn't it nice without Birdy?" he said, and we all agreed that it was. The ground looked magnificent and the boundary had been extended in the top corner so that when the time comes for Dakes to captain from fine leg in the middle of a long spell he will both have further to go and be less easy to hear – a win-win for the rest of us.

That the square was in such good condition was very much down to Birdy and his roller but especially to our groundsman. The latter is sometimes known as Robin Baker but his real name is Slices. With names like Slices and Baker you'd think this has something to do with bread but mysteriously, Baker is a butcher by trade. (Much the same was being said of Birdy as he butchered another short ball through midwicket at Stokey.)

So Baker is a Butcher and “Slices” has something to do with bacon. RolfeDog tinkered outside the off stump and sliced one to third man for four.

It was all going very well until Mike was well caught for 21 at 36-0, RolfeDog departed for 11 without further score and in came SamDog at 4. After two years out and with memories of a big one in his last innings in 2018 and now a ‘leave’ first ball, he was adjudged to have been caught off the second down the leg side, which is the first time this has ever happened to a player who has just spent two years in Barcelona: 36-3. He demanded a Spanish Inquisition which is something that nobody expects (geddit?).

The North family is indigenous to Stokenchurch and the scorebook does not make it clear exactly how many there were at our ground on the day. It looks like we got away with no more than three. One of them sent Alex southwards for 6 so that Hugo was joined by debutant Charlie Farley and the whole thing soon went west.

It was the day’s first comedy moment as Hugo overestimated the length of Charlie’s legs and was then subjected to a good bit of friendly stick from the oppo for the next half hour every time he called for a run and sometimes when he didn’t. Hollywood became the only player to hit a six to the long boundary, then tried to do the same off Lewis Springett’s loosener and gently obliged to mid-on for 10. Springett turned out to be Dave North’s grandson so is a North by proxy and had done well to place mid-on at Magnetic North.

59-6 wasn’t buttering any parsnips and 77-7 wasn’t a great deal better when Dakes departed stumped for 15. Thus it was that Hugo the Farrier was joined by Former Eton Student and Future Male Model Robert Something Somethingelse Armstrong-Jones who took the score to 116 without so much as a quarrel or a rude WhatsApp photo.

We needed a lift after the bad news that Birdy had made 100. Worse still, Birdy had kept going and had to be forcibly removed from the pitch so that Slimline Lloyd could take his place.

Back on dry land, Hugo tried unsuccessfully to clear the newly cut ash tree on the long boundary but fell (tree feller?) for his best Ridge score of 34.

In amongst this all we lined up to stand for a minute in memory of Prince Philip. Umpire Dave gave a patriotic speech in which among other things he “wished him well”. RolfeDog mumbled “it’s a bit late for that” so that Gilet standing next to him, spent the first part of the minute suppressing a giggle. We imagined the Prince not minding, and then Umpire Dave bookended the silence with a patriotic thank-you speech.

Shortbread and RAJ at the crease is a comedy moment waiting to happen and after Shortbread had played his first ball, RAJ advanced menacingly towards him. “I don’t need any advice ***I’ve only faced one ball***” riposted Shorty and RAJ returned to his end suitably chastened.

They did a rather good job. RAJ was feeling so confident that after running a single followed by four buzzers he prepared to face the next delivery. Umpire Dave was having none of it. Shorty should have been facing the next ball and so RAJ returned to his end (probably, ‘suitably chastened’).

As he progressed to 44 not out Raj was making an early claim for MoM. Umpire Dave sensed this however and took the opportunity to give Shorty out LBW. But he had met his match –

Shortwire pronounced himself not out as he had hit the ball, Dave deferred and SamDog started padding up again (just kidding).

Shortcake eventually gave himself out stumped and RAJ was joined by Sufi and only part of his kit because Hamsah had the rest of it in the boot of his car in Reading. Well on the way back from Reading, because Hamsah appeared and handed him a batting helmet and the innings ended on 186-9 which was a good recovery from not many for a lot.

We were playing a 40 over game. In Stokey the 2s were playing 45 overs and had reached 288-7, with Junaïd and Lloyd helping themselves to 50s while Birdy convalesced under a warm blanket.

Stokey set off at a pace against RAJ and Sufi until Sufi jagged one to take Hunt's middle stump, a dismissal beautifully captured on a microchip by Shorty who had transformed from Umpire to Photographer.

You may wonder how this could happen. Well we were playing 12 players into 11 fielders so Statto Gilet had scored not batted and now we were rotating a fielder off. Shorty was scoring with one hand, taking photos with the other, while sweeping up loose grass with an implement attached to his posterior and singing God Save the Queen.

Stokey were scoring at pace until Gilet came on to bowl to restore some sanity and a lot of statistics. There were two more comedy gold moments when the 2018 vice-captain and captain shelled simple catching chances. Umpire Dave was coming into his own and he gave that nice man Gilet two LBW and there was nothing more RAJ could do to prevent Dave's growing claim for MoM.

Captain DakesEye stunned everyone including the batsman with a good first ball of the season (see comments above about the expected wides) and started with a wicket maiden and maiden before declaring himself tired and conceding a few boundaries.

RolfeDog at square leg, suggested going back into the slips for Gilet: "Yes" said Dakes. RolfeDog waited for confirmation from Umpire Dave: "Yes" said Umpire Dave who was now assuming the captaincy role, and RolfeDog moved to the slips. Somewhere in all this Alex took a stumping off Gilet which was faster than the human eye and Shorty's best shutter speed.

Gilet finished his spell in a barrage of statistics including 4 overs 3-14 plus a dropped catch and was replaced by Charlie Farley's off-breaks at the bottom end. Luckily the clubs' neighbour Steve, had cut the grass in the adjacent field so DakesEye could bring Shorty on to bowl at the top. Chris North helped himself to a few pies including a rather high one which seemed to follow him and which Umpire Dave pronounced "dangerous". Shorty was flattered by this but RAJ, watching MoM slip away, put his head in his hands.

Eventually Northy (2 or 3?) hit one off Charlie in the air straight to Hugo. For a moment Hugo considered the potential effect that shelling this chance would have on his relationship with Charlie and snaffled it, to everyone's relief. At Stokey, Captain Sniff briefly posted himself on the boundary (as the team's most agile outfielder) and captained from there. At The Ridge, Dakes rotated himself off and was on the other side of the boundary rope, scorebook in hand. Sniff had not thought of that. Interestingly this did not stop Dakes from changing the field as he saw fit, giving the lie to those that think you can only captain

from the infield, or the inner field. Look out for Dakes skippering while having horse riding lessons from Stud Farm.

As for the cricket, Charlie bowled someone, but we went from a winning position with Stokey on 142-7 to defeat (190-7) only five overs later as some of our bowlers continued to brush off the rust.

There remained one more opportunity for Umpire Dave to grab the MoM award. In a late attempt to disrupt proceedings and save The Ridgebears from defeat, Joe Holmes on the boundary started a game which involved whacking a plastic ball 40 yards towards the sightscreens at the lower end so that two dogs – with considerable catching and fielding abilities - chased after and retrieved it. Naturally the players brought this to Dave's attention and he intervened in the appropriate manner and also mentioned that had these two dogs been fielding earlier Bledlow Ridge might have won the match.

At Stokey the 2s won comfortably and with Taggart among the wickets and even Chesh getting a bowl, our youth policy was well and truly under way.

RolfeDog

*Matt "Mad" Hancock was unavailable for comment*