

Bledlow Ridge II v Thame IV (Away)

Saturday 8th May

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Gates Closed as Large Crowd Watches Ridge defeat Thame

Hinge the Ginge Confused by Kenny and Penny

Simon "Fats" Martin Literally on a Roll

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Win/Lose

BRCC: 211-5 (45 overs)

Thame: 179 ao (43.5 overs)

Result: BRCC won by 32 runs. Full scorecard [here](#)

Directions to the Thame 4s ground at Lord William School, Thame, should be amended from "drive into the school grounds (*yeh, how daft am I?*) before wandering about the school buildings until you reach tennis courts and other car parks then a huge field with rugby posts some way beyond, and realise you are lost", to "*don't* drive into the school but park in the Leisure Centre and traipse across a large field until you come to another one without rugby posts".

This nearly defeated Wellsy altogether as he contacted us several times to say he was just a short distance away, but he made it just before Superman Ginge went out to bat with Chesh just after a lunar eclipse. There was a large shed for our kit and while a one or two of us were briefly inside it, Lloydly arrived and stood in the doorway and it all went dark like one of those stories in the bible.

This match had two umpires and a (full-time) scorer, as well as volunteer scorers. Special mention should be also made of Thame's opening bowlers Kenny and Penny. Rhyming opening bowling partnerships are rare: we have managed a few over the years, notably Kingy and Swingy (which is a slight exaggeration) and Matt Donnelly and Henry Donnelly (which is a bit of a cheat) but Penny and Kenny were definitely the first since Fez and Brez bowled together for us many years ago, in a rare combination of swerve and verve.

Faced with this poetic attack, 3-year-old Hinge the Ginge, who is a rhyming couplet in himself, and who has been scoring runs at will, - or 'runs for funs' - was bowled in the third over by an Iambic Pentameter from Kenny, thus ending a run of high scores on the doors. RolfeDog joined Chesh. Someone called Cheshire playing in Oxfordshire, is about as rare as a lunar eclipse or as someone called Sam Northeast playing for Hampshire. Which he does.

For a brief while, the innings became less of a contest between bowlers and batsmen, than a contest between bowler Trevor Spindler and Umpire David "The Real" Saint to see which one

could keep his nerve the longest. Once it was established that a batsman could not be bowled via a wicketkeeper's pads, things calmed down as Umpire Saint leaned on the side of caution. The appeals rained down (in biblical proportions) and a confident appeal against RolfeDog was declined.

By this time, a large crowd of first teamers had gathered following the cancellation at the Ridge, with Mike Winson winning the prize for most garish orange puffer-jacket. Hearing that two big-hitters were at the crease they had rushed over to watch BRCC 2s equivalents of Chris Gayle and Kieron Pollard. They wandered twice around the boundary during the time RolfeDog took to go from 30 to 35 and also had to recover from a direct hit to his Private Member's Enclosure.

Chesh, was adjudged LBW for a fine 63 which brought LLOYDY to the crease, and with him temporary darkness across East Oxfordshire. He had just begun to see the light when Zahoor Khan bowled him his worst delivery of the day, which Lloyd kindly returned to him but, regrettably in the air.

Wellsy replaced him and RolfeDog who had just made 50 was then bowled offering a bit of a slog. This meant we had gone from 123-1 to 124-3, however Junaid livened things up with a rapid 35, so quickly that the large crowd only managed another half-lap around the boundary. Once Junaid had been bowled, trying to hit the ball into West Berkshire, or was it Cheshire (?) Fats (15no) and Wellsy (24no) took the score to 211-5 off the allotted 45 overs.

RolfeDog had disappeared briefly during this partnership to avail of the 'facilities' in the leisure centre only to discover that the existence of Covid means that a nice clean toilet is denied you, unless you pay for a swim or a gym session, ie with the handing over of money to the local authority you become Covid-safe again. RolfeDog managed to find a very hygienic large bush instead – though with no washbasin - where he considered whether paying for a swim could be as effective as two vaccinations.

Hillarious, with a short back-and-sides, opened up down the hill and McTaggart, with a short back-and-sides-and-top, bowled up the hill (where else?). They put Thame behind the clock. Left-handed Taggart made a diving right-handed stop off his own bowling just as Dominic Cummings announced he had never been to Barnard Castle and Birdy found a gold Sovereign in his pocket. Rarer still are the occasions when Taggart makes one-handed diving stops off anyone *else's* bowling.

It was a while before Anderson and Phippen were separated but by the time The Gingerbread Man got one to fly at Phippen (11), Thame were well behind the clock (there probably was a clock in the Leisure Centre but I never got that far) and Hinge was ahead of his time.

ShortBread (2-35) bowled Anderson for 29 with a straight one which was quickly redefined as a Zooter or a Flipper by the bowler. Then, encouraged by Wellsy behind the stumps, Thame Captain Tim Dabbs (27) had a go at Shorty (who wouldn't?) and missed. Shortcake had bowled out two batsmen in the same innings, both of whom were over 13 and he was now in Dreamland. The crowd was now in Birdland as Dickers had arrived to join his brother on the boundary.

Khan and Gray set about rebuilding the run rate and were doing so successfully until Hillarious returned from the top end and got one to lift and catch the top of Gray's bat. Over Fats' head at Gully. Or so we thought.

Sometimes extraordinary things happen and, just as Lord Lucan rode by on a horse which looked suspiciously like Shergar and as Boris confessed that Brexit was all a mistake, Fats took off. 'Took off' as in 'leapt in the air'.

You heard it here first.

Drawing on the Spirit of Loxton he not only plucked the ball out of the air but managed a backward roll without losing his grip of it. As per Allan's catch at West Wycombe, Neville Cardus could not have bettered Taggart's description of "another ground with the Fats' (or substitute with the name of whoever has pulled off the unlikely catch) arseprint on it".

All eleven players and one umpire were wearing the new blue Ridge cap and almost all were wearing the new club sweater. Our fine appearance on the pitch was only disrupted by RolfeDog who had likened himself to Jonty Rhodes but who managed to field one rather more in the style of *Cecil* Rhodes, or possibly Buster Keaton and conceded our only misfield of the day, much to the amusement of ShortWire whose day was about to get better.

He brought off a fine catch at short midwicket (geddit?) to dismiss Khan (24) off that dour and lucky left-armed McTaggart. This combo struck again when ShortFuse snaffled a small skier to dismiss Sean Bellenie for 6 (despite Bellenie urging Shorty to "miss" it while the ball was in the air), in the much-vaunted ShakEy-crocodile-catching fashion of which Ben Cooperman is also a dedicated disciple.

At this point it seemed we had the match under control which was more than could be said of the crowd which was getting rather restless and was starting to conduct impromptu video interviews with players on the boundary.



Batsman Rob Kenny it seemed, could not hit the ball more than five yards. At least he had a willing and rapid running partner in 4-year-old Zachary "Zach" Harris (why couldn't any of us have an exciting name like that? the best we can offer is *Martin* Harris or Dave Wells) which kept things going until Kenny revealed his hand.

It turned out he can only hit the ball less than five yards or more than 70. Fats was now bowling from the bottom end while wearing Hillarious' former mop of hair and emitting a variety of grunts, roars and steam train noises. Kenny deposited Fats (Fat deposits?) over long on for six. That was rather serious. Then he put McTaggart over long on at the other end, which was rather amusing.

He managed to do this twice more and put Thame right back in the match, but he had reckoned without one fielder.

Yes, smarting from his failure to make it four fifties in a row, Lloyd had spent the whole innings lurking at short third man. He is at his lurking best when accompanied by a bottle of wine, but despite being banned from such substances and also from social media following a recent disciplinary hearing, he was primed for a fine piece of fielding. He had spent the whole afternoon saving his throwing arm, so when it really mattered, he was sharp enough to move the required five yards to the ball and then throw it ten yards to the stumps in the time it took Kenny (33) to run 43 yards, 2 feet and 11 inches which simply wasn't far enough.

The Ginger Wonder came back with another good spell at the top end. After Wellsy had made a sharp leg side stumping to dismiss Zach off Fats, just at the moment when Donald Trump was admitting that the US Presidential election was true and fair, we knew it was our day. It was just left for Fats to mop up (as he often does after hours at the Racquets Fitness Centre in Thame, following emergency visits by desperate sexagenarian* cricketers) by bowling Chris Penny and then trapping Trevor Spindler in front. "Plumb" said Fats. "Agreed" said Trevor, who trooped off unaccompanied by the fielding side as the scoreboard was a little behind. It took some time for us to realise that this was the last wicket to fall and that Trevor for once had not been promoted in the batting order. The opposition were wondering why we were hanging about at the wicket with no batsmen there.

Two umpires and a scorer made this an enjoyable day and the wicket behaved even better than Birdy who was on his best because Penny^ was there – except that is, for a wonderful photo he captured of Sniff taking a commercial break in a hedge.



Sniff? Played 3, Captained 2, Won 2. Sniff the Captain is back, supported by no less than five vice-captains. Fats came in as a replacement, got a red-inker, took a worldie and then took 3-30 off 7 overs. Shorty took two wickets, held two catches and if he had only made two runs, would have completed the set. Hillarious took 1-34 and on one occasion beat RolfeDog to the ball in the field. We had a grumpy left-arm seamer to match their grumpy left-arm seamer though worryingly, McTaggart reckoned he was having one of his cheerful days. Chesh was top scorer. Wellsy shelled out some cash for catches taken and Hinge the Ginge took 1-23 off 8 overs which is an economy rate of 2.88, better than anyone except Scrooge McTaggart.

We celebrated in Covid-muted fashion, but worryingly, hugs will be allowed next week. The mind boggles. Let's hope for the sake of all of us that Fats doesn't take a five-for or that Lloyd doesn't take a worldie (what chance?), unless of course Lloyd takes a worldie off Fats in which case we could be treated to quite a spectacle as they grapple. For now we must make do with Fats' emotional post-match interview.



On the way back I realised I had not thanked David Umpire Saint so I called him: "Very grateful to have a decent umpire, David" I said. "If I'd been a decent umpire, you'd have been given out" he replied. What a put down. I made a mental note not to give him a hug when we meet next week.

Boris Johnson is on holiday in Scotland

* I rather like this word as it gives Over 60s males a sense of hope

^ No! Penny Winter not Chris Penny of Thame, unless we have been missing something all these years.

