

BRCC v West Wycombe CC – Away

Sunday 25th April 2021

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Charley Farley and Hinge-the-Ginge Set Up Ridge Victory

Sniff's Electric Fielding Takes the Sting out of West Wycombe

Jov Almost Arrives Naked, Sniff is Sartorial and Lloydly Wears a Silly Hat

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BRCC: 211-2 (40 overs)

WWCC: 151-6 (40 overs)

Result: Won by 60 runs

It's 12.40 and I am just about to set off for the match when the phone rings. It's Allan.

"I'm lost" says Allan.

"Aren't we all?" I reply.

"I've no idea where I am" says Allan.

"Welcome to my world" say I.

Allan explained that he was sitting in his car outside a cricket ground but that it was all locked up.

He had made a schoolboy error.

Yes, Allan had arrived *early* for a Bledlow Ridge away match. No less that 50 minutes early. Had it been Dakes he would have had a nosebleed. Somewhere, Jovan was probably checking into a sandwich bar before driving in the wrong direction (see Stokey 2s report last year). But Allan was early. Surely he had been a RidgeBear long enough to know better?

By the time I arrived, the WW skipper was mowing the wicket, putting out the boundary ropes and setting out the flags just like Dakes on any ordinary matchday.

Captain Hollywell was contemplating whether to bat or bowl and soon realised it could only be one or the other – there was no third option. This in turn depended on him winning the toss, another 50-50 chance.

Win it he did and sent out 7 year-old Charlie Farley with 6 year-old Ginger Whinger to face the might of West Wycombe. And what a decision! 90 runs for the first wicket, quick singles everywhere and boundaries in abundance. Even Bethan ("Bedlam") Hickey came to watch a cricket match and beamed from ear to ear.

Hinge the Ginge made an early claim for the Champagne Moment. He asked Umpire Gilet (thanks Gilet) how many balls there were left in an over to which the answer was "five". I mean how many did it *feel* like, for him to ask that question?! Anyway, he made 44 whole, excellent runs before being caught.

Those genteel West Wycombe players are not quite what they seem: they gave the incoming batsman Lloydly (who had arrived at the ground wearing a hat of almost indescribable eccentricity) some polite verbals along the lines of "let's see whether this jolly nice big chap fancies any quick singles", then when RolfeDog (umpiring at square leg) expressed relief that the music wafting over

from the WW estate was classical (almost Wagnerian) and not heavy metal, WW's aptly named Alex *Wagner* revealed a headband with "Guns 'n Roses" printed across it. Moreover, with a name like that, he must run Rings round batsmen (geddit? all you classical music non-Philistines).

Not today though, although Charley soon hit the ball to a fielder and, mistaking Lloyd for Hinge the Ginge, (an easy mistake to make), called for a quick, panic-stricken single. They survived.

Gilet, from his viewpoint as umpire, was able to watch Charley stroke his way to a stylish 50 and on to 71 before finally Charley was finally caught behind, which brought in Jovan.

It is always a thing of wonder when Jov arrives at a ground much before teatime. He went one further on this occasion and arrived with a severe shortage of kit. RolfeDog provided him with a smart new Ridge cricket sweater at which point Jov realised he needed to buy a shirt as well and that he didn't have any batting gloves.

Jovan made it to the crease fully kitted out and proceeded to *not* play himself in with a series of aggressive strokes which lifted Lloyd out of his stupor at the other end and past his 50 while Jov thrashed all-comers and ended 27 not out, the team on 211-2 after 40 overs and not a defensive stroke from Jov in sight.

We had tea after an innings during which two old visitors, Birdy and Fats had hobbled around the ground discussing their alacrity of the day before. Arthur Daly Rolfe had done a job on almost all of the Ridge team, who took the field resplendently dressed in new club cable-knit sweaters (with blue V's and club badge) and new upmarket club caps (with club logo). Well, except for Jovan who, having only just received his own new club sweater went out to keep wicket dressed like Woody from Toy Story. It turned out he was wearing a top from Valley End CC. FFS!

Sniff by contrast was sartorial. Sartorial Sniff. Until recently he has worn shirts and sweaters that probably originated in the sixties. No longer Sixties Sniff, from now, Sartorial Sniff.

And he fielded like Super Sniff, at least until he had to hop over the fence to retrieve a ball and with a little squeal (Squealing Sniff), revealed that the line of wire was electrified. Great Balls of Fire. How we laughed. To rub it in (almost literally), he did this in front of our three spectators: a LoveBite and two LoveBirds (well one is a Winter actually).

By this time, Carlton and Hollymead had bowled so well that after 20 overs at about 33-0, the game was as good as over. OK, so Ryan is capable of scoring at eight or nine an over as is David Jones, but David wasn't playing and it's a big ask anyway. So, now the serious bit in this report: Sunday matches in glorious surroundings against friendly opposition should – In My Humble Opinion – be timed games. "Oh, but you get boring draws" some people say. "Not if both captains know how to play it" is the reply. In timed games, the fielding captain in the second innings makes bowling and fielding changes to keep the game alive, encouraging the opposition batsmen to think they can win the game when all the time the skipper knows this is impossible and instead he wins the game by two runs with one ball to spare. OK! or he loses it on the last ball by one wicket. Either way it's good cricket.

Under win/lose rules, Brightmead did it perfectly: put WW out of the game, helped by Taggart's miserly (no surprise there) spell as first change. The only disappointment of his spell was that Umpire Gilet did not have the opportunity to deny Taggart a plumb LBW.

Allan had no truck with Andrew Biffa (7), (geddit?), caught by Jov who was wearing a VECC sweater (or did I already mention that?). Ben Woolams (12) was bowled by Taggart which is about as bad as it can get for a batsman. Charley took two wickets with his offbreaks and then induced a skier from Ryan Parrett (46) whereupon Allan, resting at near-long-stop, set off and took another worldie at full length. This induced from Taggart the congratulatory response: "Another ground with the Loxton arseprint". Eat your heart out Neville Cardus.

A ball went into the field, pursued by Chesh and we watched nervously after Sniff's electrifying experience. Chesh arrived at the fence, opened a gate that wasn't there last year and walked right through. On returning he simply closed the gate and, just like Platform 9¾, the gate disappeared again. Pure class from Chesh.

Hinge the Ginge Hickey (ask me sometime) bowled four overs, then it was time for some Comedy Gold. HollyBright brought on Chesh – who else? He approaches the wicket in the way a Sidewinder Snake idles up to a rodent before unleashing its venom. I'm getting carried away now because the ball travels from Chesh to the other end without venom but in a gentle, innocent arc. Gavin Evans (14) lost the will to live while waiting for one to arrive and Chesh celebrated his wicket like someone who has discovered oil in his back garden, or, as Hollywood put it, someone who has never taken a wicket before. Well, I have to confess he once induced an LBW decision against MyGoodSelf with a plea to the umpire which would have broken the heart of the most resolute of men and which reflected his former employment with John Lewis: 'never knowingly undersold'.

It remained for Razman and Alex Head to see time out with a few thrashes at Chesh (not literally) and a few play-and-misses at Carlton. West Wycombe made it to 151-6 and The Ridge won by 60 runs. Sniff and RolfeDog had the distinction of neither batting nor bowling, but only one of these had put his balls on the line for the team, so to speak, so RolfeDog went into the scorebook as "No 11 – Did Not Bat".

One or two of us repaired to The Swan where Christine took names and phone numbers (for Covid purposes only I assume) and with a withering stare asked me if I was "the John Rolfe who looks after Vikki's garden?"

Well, what a question to ask! And in front of all those people. Was this the time to finally admit that yes, it had been me, all these years? Either way I was incriminated. In the end I thought of Boris Johnson and denied it. I also denied wallpapering her living room too, for good measure.

A drink, then back home, and a deep sleep. Was it a dream or did Jov really call to say he was lost, sitting in his car outside some locked-up cricket ground called Valley End CC?

Dominic Raab has been taken away for questioning.