

Horley 1s v Bledlow Ridge 1s

Saturday 23rd August 2014

Ridge Bears outdone in Horseplay at newly-discovered Horley

Steve Knapp's tiger outfit defeats opposition in fancy dress battle

BRCC 170-9 (53 overs)

Horley 171-5 (not as many overs)

Lost by 5 wickets and a riding crop.

Worried as ever that we might not have enough cars to get the team to an away match, Captain Brooks had arranged for enough vehicles to gather at the club for passers-by to stop in and ask when the car rally was due to start. 'Well when HairBear arrives' was the answer.

Not everyone had been told it was fancy dress day, but Steve Knapp had. While we waited, the Knapster briefly disappeared. Or seemed to. He was you see, dressed in perfect camouflage for the Bengali Jungle what with his brightly coloured tiger-print shirt; luckily a Ridge Bear appeared from the undergrowth known as Lord Keeping's estate (the undergrowth not the Ridge Bear though could have been either) to threaten his dominance of the Bledlow Ridge terrain and he became visible again.

All the cars disappeared except Steve's as we waited for the arrival of HairBear who had decided to come as a circus clown after stopping at Dave Bird's house to borrow a pair of whites after mislaying his own.

Evidently he had been behaving as a teenager that morning and on arrival, as he carried his kit (and some of Dave's) to Steve's car for the journey, he was given such a sharp admonition by his mum that I thought I had left the cap off the Fairy Liquid bottle again – at my house obviously.

Suitably chastised he sat in silence taking in the Knapster's and Rolfey's interesting conversation about cleaning hospital wards with hydrogen peroxide.

Horley is a tight-knit cricketing community, newly arrived in the Cherwell League in 2013 having only been discovered a decade earlier by some pioneering cricketers who, late for a match (having probably been given one of Taggart's meet times) and operating dodgy SatNav came across a clearing on the way to

Great and Little Tew. They found a people living quietly at peace with horses, whose tranquility was broken only by the sound of a large extractor fan overlooking this clearing where the missionaries then introduced the strange game of cracket, which later developed into cricket as we know it today.

As we know it means: small ground, outside toilet, sporting wicket, small pavilion converted into a crèche on matchdays to accommodate the burgeoning population. This crèche incorporated an enormous library in anticipation that the second generation would develop advance reading and writing skills before the arrival of the computer.

Geoff Tombsdog tried reading a couple of these books but found them too complex so instead made himself known to the oppo's nice young lady scorer who would – as he put it – be acting as babysitter to Young Tom. Young Tom is yet another of the Bledlow Ridge Junior Academy production line; in his case the production line was on full throttle as he stands 9 foot high at the age of 14. For a small bribe he had volunteered to score for us.

We lost the toss and batted, as opposed to won the toss and batted... on a lively one against one particularly lively opening bowler. Having survived a thin edge Russ smacked a full toss at a fielder in the air (the ball in the air rather than the fielder) which is what happens sometimes when you are in outstanding form. RolfeDog joined Dan M and created an argument with the talkative oppo who observed that he even “pulls away from batting if he hears a bird Tweeting”. Computers must have arrived earlier than thought but got into the wrong hands. Or wings. I expect the horses have developed a nuclear reactor.

Dan got an unplayable one and was caught behind, then Matt got an unplayable one and was – wait for it – caught behind. Tombsy joined his great pal RolfeDog and these two put on a brief rescue act, Tombsy playing the only hook shot of the day, achieved without moving a leg muscle with the excellent outcome of a one-bounce four over the ‘keeper’s head.

Having done the hard bit RolfeDog decided it was time to play across the line of leg stump and get out LBW for the third week in succession.

Dogged Doug and Jovial Geoff got stuck in and put on 51 valuable runs before Geoff offered a catch which was taken and so he returned to the pavilion for 19 runs, to have a go at reading some Enid Blyton. Deadpan Doug did nothing Drastic but HairBear got his bat caught up in his pantomime trousers and was bowled. Determined Doug was eventually LBW for 22, Scott was caught in the gully – aren’t we all – but while this was going on Captain Brooks, dressed as usual in seven long-sleeved sweaters had arrived at the crease, and was thrashing away.

There’s must be a gag to be had about a crease in Dave Bird’s trousers but I can’t think of it.

This thrashing became more and more effectual and with some big four and six hitting Captain Phil got to an unbeaten 50 and us up to 170-9, with Vajid contributing valuably at the other end. Steve Knapster's reward for travelling and playing, as opposed to travelling and umpiring for the umpteenth time, was that he did not get into bat. So he put on his tiger top and disappeared for a bit.

Young Tom seemed to have mastered this scoring thing and took his reward in the shape of about a thousand sandwiches and several wedges of chocolate cake. It takes a lot to feed a human factory. At tea I thought for a mad fleeting moment I saw someone in the pavilion with a riding crop.

We had success early on. Four catches went to Dan Maunder who accepted the last three so that after MSD's early wicket Vajid took three wickets and at 60-odd for four then 120 odd for five, we really seemed to have chance. What we didn't know was that the No 6 had only been out once this season and so it remained, as he took them home at a rate of knots and got his average to over 500 for the year.

So we lost by 5 wickets to the wild folk of Horley who reappeared after showering, in various guises, no doubt influenced by Steve's shirt, except in all kinds of horsey wear. The community is closer-knit than I had thought and when one player appeared as half-man half-horse I was prompted to discover how wide the gene pool really was.

I asked one of his teammates where he lived and he said he lived a mile away. Doug who can't have been paying attention then managed to ask him exactly the same question and got the answer "two miles away." Either this local must have a problem with measurement or his family was moving house that day while he played cricket. Or he did not understand the question. Or Doug's accent.

Looking at half-man half-horse I mentioned the word "Centaur" but Geoff thought I was taking guard and as a reflex action said "hold your bat up straight". This prompted him for some reason to go and buy the nice young opposition lady scorer a drink, for whose benefit, her's, Young Tom's, or his own, we were not sure.

Young Tom had become so confident about this scoring lark that on his first ever foray into a scoreboard he had graduated to scoring with different coloured pens for different bowlers and commented that scoring is really 'quite easy'. On taking the book back to the club I discovered that he had even moved to the advanced stage. On his very first day's scoring he had managed to implement that great trick of scorers of scoring the second innings about 30 pages away from the first so that in centuries hence, historians will wonder whether both innings took place on the same day. And whether coloured pens had been discovered suddenly in the middle of one Saturday afternoon in the early 21st Century.

The day was not quite over. Dreamy Doug had gone into Disorganised Mode. The tight-knot Horley community was thrown into Disarray by the disappearance not only of Doug's mobile phone but his "£180 quid-you-know" spectacles. The oppo

could not help much because they have not yet been introduced either to mobile phones or glasses and did not know what they were looking for, although one did offer Doug a beer-mug to look through. He may as well have.

As Doug emptied his kit-bag – which was sitting alongside others - onto the outfield with some help from RolfeDog, we got the first bit of good news. His phone rang. Except that remarkably it was not ringing from inside *his* kitbag but someone else's. Only the spectacles to find: the contents of Destructive Doug's kitbag were now scattered everywhere and just as RolfeDog managed to land a pair of sporting briefs on to Geoff's head with a particularly accurate throw, Dopey Doug announced a great Discovery. Yes even more important than the discovery of the Tribe of Horley some years ago, Dim Doug found that his specs had been in his pocket all the time.

We could not top that really, so said our goodbyes, fed the locals some hay and made our way back to Buckinghamshire. James HairBear enjoyed listening to another discussion about the pharmaceutical industry and we arrived back to learn that the 2s had got the better of Wolverton 2s in a rain-affected match. We had had hardly a drop of rain at Horley but the Knapster had had one major impact on the day way back at Taggart's meeting time of 11am. With that shirt he had turned Bledlow Ridge into a rainforest.

RolfeDog

William Rees-Mogg is currently skiing in Egypt