

Bledlow Ridge 2s v Bledlow Village 2s

Saturday 3rd August 2013

Match Report

Bledlow Ridge 2s 158-7

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Lost by 3 wickets

Another week Ferreting around for players. Only 14 men and McTaggart was getting through the ciggies. He checked the Handbook. Yes, this was last week for registrations – more importantly the regulations allowed for one ciggie every 3.5 minutes... as long as it was not raining.

Somehow Taggart did it again; teams were announced followed immediately by his email observation that this is not an invitation for debate along the lines: "I'd rather not play away", "Why is gubbings playing in the 2s, I'd be much better off in the 2s as their seventh bowler" etc

My email to the selected eleven, urging an early arrival and other high standards resulted in the instant drop out of our two youngest members. Tim Maunder then spent an anxious three days under threat of playing his first cricket match for almost 40 years while Freddie was dragged from the piano once again. He did compensate by bringing a book written by one JP Satre which was more than Dave Oxford English Graduate could manage.

DOEG netted on Friday, in order to demonstrate his shoulder could withstand a bowling spell. This was double insurance, firstly against going away with the 1s in a late call-up, on the basis the 2s needed every bowler they could find, and secondly against keeping in the 2s.

My email may have done for the two youngsters but for two oldsters it was much too confusing. Malcolm would be 'busy' and unable to arrive by 12.20, 12.21 being his best hope. (I suggested he got up two minutes earlier). "Busy" means shopping for organic food and going swimming.

Ady for his part was flummoxed. The email advised that among other accoutrements no watches were to be worn (by players on the pitch). Ady could not work out how he could arrive early without a watch. Could we do smoke signals? Well on recent evidence at The Ridge the answer is probably "Yes" . As for a "warm up", wasn't this the hottest summer since the last one?

Well Ferret, aka Fez was the man – or Ferret – who responded nobly to a last minute call-up from as far as Wantage while Dom responded from as far as Saunderton. His wife on a rare day off was able to spend it watching cricket at the Ridge.

In the event quite a lot of our team arrived before some of theirs, with or without watches and without smoke signals.

We were put in to bat, RolfeDog urged the team to sell their wickets dearly and then got out skying a pull shot. Baz played one drive and the lower three inches of his bat went further than the ball while the rest of it remained in his hand.

Lots of jokes about Sports Retailers followed but I guess he has an endless supply. Of bats that is, not jokes, on recent evidence.

He and Ady scored rapidly before Baz copied Rolfey and once Ady was out for 29 the ball after a debate about a boundary, Malik – did I mention him yet? - and DOEG had to rebuild the innings.

Malik had ghosted in under the radar at around 12.45. He played fairly circumspectly after the first ball boundary until DOEG missed one and Malik was out almost immediately after, both of them for about 20.

Scott who always looks like Death Warmed Up on a Saturday, was joined briefly by a Ferret, who always looks like, well, Death Warmed Up on a Saturday, Sunday, Monday & etc, and then was joined a little less briefly by the Guv'nor. A rain/ciggie break shortened our innings but did give Scott the chance to correct our scorebook or rather his total from about 1 not out to 7 not out, this coming shortly after some confusion over who was bowling as Scorer Baz thought all the Bledlow bowlers looked exactly the same.

The overs were revised with a calculation that was slightly complicated by Umpire Willow's mathematical reasoning and by Umpire Alan Brookes' cigarette time for which we had to refer to the League Handbook.

Bledlow had an endless sequence of seam bowlers. There was enough time for the Guv'nor to prove he can run slower than Malik and for Scott to play a vital 28 not out and get us to 158-7.

This was a total that we did have some chance of defending seeing as there was life and bounce in the wicket. Yes now that The Ridge has lost most of its seam bowlers we are producing lively seam-bowler-friendly wickets.

At tea I looked in turn at our three prospective wicket-keepers. Fancy keeping Baz? I suggested to the Greatest Sports Retailer Ever (except for a broken bat). I can keep wicket chirped Fez who was not one of the three prospects.

In fact I had him in mind as one of our only four bowlers, on the proviso he would not lick my face if I caught a catch off him, as he did last time.

Emboldened* by this (*one of my best puns!) and not wanting to keep wicket, Rob said he could bowl. In three seasons he has not shown any willingness to bowl. Until now. A sure sign he did not want to keep wicket.

“Yes I run in from 12 paces and put it on the spot”. That is just what Jimmy Anderson does and amazed at our new discovery, Fez put on the pads and Baz warmed up (by sending smoke signals to Ady).

By the time all this was decided and after a rousing motivational speech we were due on to the pitch.

Scott rolled up his sleeves by, well, rolling up his sleeves but... where was Malik? It being Ramadan he had of course not joined us for tea .

He was Nowhere. In desperation I ran through the car park looking for a Mercedes with someone in it.

I found one. It contained Freddie “Sports Retailer” Hawkins. You can imagine how I was taken by surprise - I had no idea he was even fasting.

It was all I could do to stop this Freddie playing, as two Freddie's on the pitch would have been too much and anyway Malik finally appeared after the first over. What a first over.

You see it has become evident there is some jealousy down in the Village about the existence on the Ridge of the elitist Dog family containing as it does one Lord of Bledlow. So in retrospect two Villagers were accorded “Dog” status for the day.

WillowDog the Umpire was the first, having turned out for us the previous weekend, and KeensDog for generally being a legend and most of all for being older than me. Sorry Freddie: older than “I”.

Not only did opener KeensDog have to wait for the first ball while we tried to solve the mystery of Malik, just before Henry ran in he had to wait for the ceremonial unrolling of short shirt sleeves by Scott.

With this build-up he faced Henry's first ball, shouldered arms magnificently and was bowled. This brought back memories of Brooksie in the first (inter-club match) of the season except that a) Brooksie had tried to hit his and b) this time it was a perfect break-back from Henry.

A score of 0-1 almost became 0-2 in the same over. The game became a contest as wickets and runs came at regular intervals. RolfeDog and PC Summons shelled sharp chances off slip both off Henry who, a year older and stronger bowled a magnificent line bagging three wickets. With another dropped edge at the end of the innings he might have had six.

David Maunder's shoulder eventually warmed up and there is now a cricketer somewhere in Bledlow Ridge who has been bowled by David's slower ball.

Then the dangerous Jabber Shirley came in and despatched David Oxford English Graduate's first ball for four with the comment “Division 6 bowling”. DOEG's next ball passed the bat and there was a

similar retort which you can guess. This was true Wycombe Grammar Hockey Sticks sledging, against Princes Risborough Grammar Football Boots sledging.

"I don't think he likes me" said DOEG. Jabber threatened to eat him alive but was silenced when DOEG challenged him to a game of chess after the match..

My elderly mother then came to our help by walking in front of the sight screen. Surprising perhaps as she knows her cricket but she does seem to have lost her turn of pace. (Rather like Baz' bowling, see below.)

As I stood somewhere mid-way between the two I thought I heard the word "Old" from Jabber's direction as he waited, followed by the word "Fat" from somewhere near the sightscreen.

My sister then tried standing next to the sightscreen in the batsman's eye-line. (This was a trick replicated later by Ady who actually stood fielding in front of it).

When Henry went to field there at the end of the over she asked him "What do you think of your captain?". "Rubbish" came the reply, but smelling a rat he quickly corrected himself with "Magnificent" which was of course the right answer.

After the match this same sister expressed surprise that she had not recognised Steve Williams (WillowDog) who I told her had been umpiring. "Was he the **portly** one?" she asked.

What a poser! This implied that either Alan or WillowDog was *not* portly and after some discussion we concluded she could have been referring to either, or neither.

Baz replaced Henry with a run up as long as Jimmy Anderson and delivered the ball at the pace of Phil Brookes. But he did bowl straight. Scotty had been working away at the other end and suddenly Jabber was Caught Ferret bowled Scotty, a dismissal that would have been improbable on say the previous Monday evening or at any time in the previous 30-odd years. This was possibly the low point of Jabber's career.

After another rain-induced fag-break lasting for 3 ciggies, Scott, who ended with 3-48, then produced a wonderful long-hop and took a fine return catch to dismiss Ben Moore. With six down and about 30 wanted there was a chance. More so after another caught and bowled. But they made it home largely thanks to Adam Tapping's 32 not out, by three wickets in a fine game.

I had slightly despaired at the start of the day at the apparent lack of bowling but in the event, the unlikely attack of Henry (well Henry is not 'unlikely' 3-25 off a lot of overs), DOEG, Scott and Baz bowled more than well enough to make captaincy a most enjoyable challenge, supported as it was by some good fielding notably a memorable full length stop by Freddie's knee.

Henry bowled accurately enough to do without a long-leg which in effect created an extra fielder. If Malcolm had been able to bowl he would not have had a long leg either; you see he usually bowls with two Short Legs and a tiny Gully but never with much of a Point as far as I have been able to see.

Honourable defeat by 3 wickets and with the slightly early finish more than enough time for Umpire Alan have a few more fags at the regulation rate of 3.5 minutes a fag up until 7.30 before attempting almost single-handed to drink the club dry.

There is nothing in the Handbook about that.

RolfeDog