

## **Ridgebears steal march on Rivals as Victory Effort is Thwarted by Rain**

### ***Shaun solves mystery of the Missing “E” in Shak(e)y***

**BRCC 2s 213-5 45 overs**

**Oxford IVs 82-7 36 overs**

#### **Match abandoned - Rain**

Most of the cricket was played in the week leading up. Phrases like “we have 8, you are 2 short, my wife is not available, but the cat is standing –by, but if you take X and Y then I have to bowl at both ends” gave way to words of affection like “t\*\*\*\*” and “a\*\*e” (only two asterisks on the basis that the latter is marginally more acceptable than the former) and “Will someone tell Malcolm how to use his \*\*\*\*\*g phone?”...

... and then the 1s game was rained off anyway. Didn’t you just know it, and this, the fixture v Chearsley where nine weeks earlier Jamie had visited and declared their ground playable despite the presence of someone called Noah and a very large boat.

It was therefore fun to email Brez early on Saturday when the game was still on to say a Chearsley representative was at our ground and watch (on email) the panic that followed.

Oxford’s ground seemed to be in a rain-free zone so with the news that our rivals Bledlow Village were not playing we lost the toss in traditional fashion, were put into bat and learned that Malik had broken down en route. Or rather his car. Driver Saeed was not playing you see, despite his desire: to play for the 1s (early season) to play only for the 2s (this week), to be the best bowler in the 2s (this week), agreeing to play in the 1s (this week) then unable to play in the 2s when the 1s was washed out (11am on Saturday).

So Malik alias Malkolm who has successfully motivated Saeed to provide early and effective transport waited to see if the RAC could successfully stand-in for our missing spinner.

In the dressing room, The Greatest Sports Retailer in the World identified Mr Schniff as the wearer of a shirt “that must be at least 40 years old” and we expect a sale very soon. He is also working on the sale of a pair of go-faster trainers to Malcolm.

RolfeDog and Baz opened on an inevitably very wet pitch. Shaky (no E, but where is it?) settled down for a snooze as he realised RolfeDog was set-in for an afternoon of strokeless batting and he dreamed of Gianfranco Zola and Watford Town FC instead.

The Greatest Sports Retailer in the World dutifully left the first ten balls he received and edged the 11th safely before sparkling with boundaries during which time he noted for later, the sledging from Arthur in the opposition.

And then something rather unlucky happened. He nicked one at pace; surely four runs in this cricket? No way would The Ridge have anyone able to fly low through the air and pluck a fast low catch at slip, but Oxford IVs did and Baz left a little unlucky with 19.

Doug the Doom-Monger replaced him and he and RolfeDog sped up to 58-1 at halfway (23 overs) Sniff mentioning that when RolfeDog spotted a cunning attempt to run him out as usual from a teammate, and dived to make good his ground, “this is the most interesting thing he has done all day”.

Rolfedog, as a 57-year-old-recovering from Man-Flu, almost expired from running but was saved by drinks; the next ball after drinks Doug identified the need to accelerate by sacrificing himself so that Malik could bat, Malik's safe arrival having been assured by a competent mechanic who although good with a spanner could not bowl off-spin. The predicted increase in run rate ensued as Malik scattered the bowling and the fielders to all parts. Having done this successfully and already made 22 he then took aim at a fielder 70 yards away and dropped a shot into the grateful hands of someone I had earlier astutely identified as a non-fielder.

Brez came in. Now if you were at the VKO Match a fortnight ago you might remember a similar partnership in which RolfeDog proved that Brez can neither call, run, turn round at full speed, or run fast enough in reverse... This put running and calling at a premium, an undertaking that was carried on most effectively taking the score to 140 although RolfeDog, now 71 years old and suffering from pneumonia was a little put out to be informed he was not running the first one fast enough. Which only proved that Brez lives in another time warp.

RolfeDog finally expired for 47 runs in 13 days, 4 hours and 15 minutes (thank you Shaky!) which brought Shaky (missing E) to the wicket whereupon he was easily able to take advantage of the situation prepared for him by all the preceding batsmen who had had to toil so hard in adverse conditions just so that Shaky (mystery E) could hit the rubbish balls we had all missed, for four and six.

In shock at the other end Brez hit 15 singles in a row – surely a first for him - until Shaky faced a good ball and was bowled leaving what can only be known as a Watford Gap between bat and stumps. All the twos, 22.

With Dickers' arrival at the wicket, Brez woke up, well wouldn't you? and went into overdrive mode while Dickers called and ran very well for his 17 not out – an example to us all, especially Brez I must say.

Captain Doomsday McTaggart was under pressure from RolfeDog to declare early but decided to postpone any declaration until Brez made his 50 and so it was with a perfect mix of sneering hubris and malevolent I-told-you-so'ism that Rolfedog noted that Brez was 47 not out and no more, when our 45 overs were completed. Matt Donnelly as usual was Next Man In and we were spared the possibility of watching Sniph score his first run of the season.

213-5. A mighty good score. Perfectly read by the openers who agreed that 160 would be enough, that about 60 would be fine at drinks and that in any case the rest of the team needed a snooze before we let loose the sloggers in the sun after the hard graft had been done in the gloom. And you know what Shaky (E gone missing) said? : “We *recovered* well” “Recovered!!?” I ask you. It was written all in the masterplan while Shaky – or Watford as he may be known, there are no problems with “Es” in Watford, only with promotion, ha ha – was snoozing.

Trouble with having no umpires is that there is no one to hurry up the players at tea. Things were not helped by the fact that the changing room combination lock had been switched on by someone, so that the groundsman had to be found. He was evidently among the staff cracking codes at Bletchley Park in WW2 and was eventually able to crack the code, grumble a little at me – it's called shooting the messenger – so that we were able to get ourselves ready much before the opposition.

We did as the captain exhorted and got 15 overs in quickly as this makes the game into a “Match” (after 60 overs) but as I estimate tea took about 45 minutes it may be that the 5 overs or so we lost in that time, rather than rain, may have ultimately cost us victory. Rather

mysteriously the groundsman appeared on the field of play about half way to the boundary, during one over; more mysteriously he was on his outfield mower. He then glided off as silently as he had arrived rather like a UFO would, except I suppose that I have just identified it for you. It is possible that as a Bletchley Park Codebreaker disguised as the Oxford Groundsman he was trying to trace Malcolm's mobile phone.

Brez eventually got an LBW, bringing in Arthur. Now it was Arthur's bad luck that Baz was fielding very close. Most of us have The Greatest Sports Retailer in the World down as a gentleman – well perhaps except when he Schniffes a sale – but to our shock he revealed some Australian, and he so goaded Arthur that he tore down the wicket and missed one: b Brzezicki.

At the other end a miracle happened. The greatest miracle of flight since the passing of the Dodo. Even greater than anything achieved by the Wright Brothers. This one was achieved by one of the Bird Brothers.

You see Shaky who had been toiling at the other end was getting a little jealous of these wickets. The players for their part were unable to decide what is becoming more boring; RolfeDog's batting or Shaky's moaning about dropped catches off his bowling. So we all pay attention when Watford is bowling.

He found the edge; a thin one. The ball fell fast and low, forward and to the right of our very own Flightless Bird; a sort of Ostrich reared at Macdonald's. And then it happened; this Bird went into a spiral and started to swoop; as his victim got closer he glided fast and low and plucked the unlucky ball millimetres from the ground in a modern-made miracle; the batsman rubbed his eye in disbelief until our skipper advised him his presence at the crease was no longer required.

Shaky then tried bowling one halfway down the wicket and the batsman, thinking this was a tennis serve knocked it back in the air to the safe hands of Doug McIndoooooooo whose sons were presumably locked up for the day as they were nowhere to be seen.

But their opener was resisting and the weather was closing in and we still had to get 6 more wickets. Time to call Malcolm. Well not on the phone obviously; as McTaggart says "When the \*\*\*\*\* Malcolm ever going to answer his \*\*\*\*\* phone, doesn't he \*\*\*\*\* know how to use it??" (You will note the cunning use of asterisks here and that you cannot guess the words straight away; if unsuccessful contact the Oxford CC groundsman).

The Guv'nor ran in, those thirty strides that take up only three yards, he grinned, delivered the ball, and of course bowled a batsman. That was the last ball of the over. During the next over at the other end, the opener finally gave up the ghost as it were, collapsed with cramp, took off his pads and left the field, retired hurt. One over from Malcolm and he had seen enough.

He was right too as Malcolm bowled another with the first ball of his next over which meant he was on a hat-trick but he suffered a complete mental collapse with the hat-trick ball which the batsman did not have to play. At least we know we cannot attribute this mental frailty to radiation brought on by excess mobile phone usage.

We had them on the run but aaaaagghhh! RolfeDog missed a chance at short-leg (no Geoff was not playing) off- wait for it, and remember we were wondering who was more boring: RolfeDog with his batting or ShakyE with his appreciation of catches dropped off his bowling. You have your answer; off Shaky. In any case RolfeDog had spent the whole afternoon dropping the ball on its way back to the bowler and was taking some stick for this; this abuse reached a pinnacle when the Flightful Bird, now a little full of himself following

his recent aerobatics, commented that RolfeDog couldn't catch a cold. Ha b\*\*\*\*\* ha  
(Decode that one).

The player RolfeDog missed – I won't say dropped because he – I – was not good enough to get hands on it, then played well and although the Guv-nor got another, caught by the Greatest Sports Retailer In... yes I'm tired of the long name too... the rain set in hard and the game ended 12 overs short with Oxford on 80-7 with another retired hurt of course.

We checked the maths; Watford took 2-30, Brez 2-18 and Malcolm a lucky 3-12. We took 17 points gaining 11 over all our rivals in the Division who were rained off.

And then it happened. Ever suspicious, RolfeDog checked the scorebooks and not surprisingly given events at Great Tew, found his score had been tampered with and accredited to Devious Doug but in doing so found where the missing E in Shak(E)y has been all this time. Joy, laughter and merriment followed as we discovered that Shaun, fast becoming The Ridge's Greatest Scorer (watch out Sid) has given it to The Guv'nor. All those wickets were taken by Malcolm AshbEy. Yes AshbEy. That's where the E has been all this time, in the scorebook, disguised within a teammates' name.

And here and now, in this report, despite serious sledging from my teammates over run scoring rates, I reinstate the missing E in its rightful place. And good for you ShakEy.

Shakey, Shakey Shakey, Shakey, **Shakey** Shakey Shakey Shakey 5 3 2 1 0 (Got you there!) Shakey, ... and I could go on but you get my point. He Watford and Zola, now in perfect harmonEy.

So we took 17 points from the day which is in itself a mathematical feat to work out, the Cherwell League scoring system being what it is. Not as good as 25 of course, 8 short of what we wanted but 11 more than Bledlow Village on the day and about 7 more than we were averaging last season.

And if you know anyone who has ever worked as a Codebreaker at Bletchley Park you can use the figures used in the above paragraph to identify Malcolm the Guvnor's phone number and give him a call and ask if he would like to play next week.

Written by RolfeDog (which is why he gets so many mentions).