

The Wisdom of the Fridge Magnet

Bledlow Ridge 2s 183-7

Bledlow Village 2s 187-2

Lost by 8 wickets

Our hitherto useless tosser won one for a change and controversially decided to break the mould of insertion by proudly declaring that we would take first use of a wicket which, he confidently predicted, would start to go 'through the top' after about 25 overs.

The pre-match briefing didn't go on for too long about the significance of the match as regards the league, as we pretty much all got that, but the skipper did give one very clear instruction, along with the usual formula of 30 each for the first 4, 20 for 5-8 and 7 each for 9,10, jack (which some of our team are now beginning to correlate with the maximum batting points scenario).

Given the pressure we were put under by a fairly innocuous but straight bowler in the last game against Bledlow, the batsmen were requested and required to use their heads. Disrupt him by all means, but do not, repeat NOT do anything stupid and come back offering a sheepish "Sorry skip"

For the first ten overs, troops suitably instructed and seemingly following orders, he strutted (with not a little smugness) around the scorebook as openers Maunder (Daniel) and Wells (David) settled nicely against the supposed guile of Spooner and youthful zest of Harman. Dan was stumped down the leg side (proving that you CAN be given out this way – more later), but with the score at 42-1 off 14, things were reasonably on plan.

At that point however, the plan got torn up, and there were a procession of the dreaded "Sorry skip"s. Big Mac called a suicidal run and a direct hit sealed his fate (slamming the changing room door with his son in rear was not big and not clever), Jamma swiped at a wide one and top edged a skyer to short third man, Malik played a Malik-type swish across a straight one as did the hitherto stylish and comfortable DW. Our openers were both gone, and our 3,4,5 had added precisely 0,0, & 5 respectively. Jamma was so upset that he decided to have a fight with the changing room wall, which he comprehensively lost, thus giving us a one handed fielder and one less seamer for the second innings.

Shaky (no E) got the best ball of the day which did a few things (some of them twice) en route to the top of his middle stump and thus it was left to Dickers, Saeed and Scott to try and get us a defensible total. What a fine job they did too; Saeed, striking the ball beautifully and picking the balls diligently made an excellent half century (which went noticeably unapplauded on the field) whilst first Dickers and then Scott supported intelligently, both scoring twenty plus. Village looked a little nonplussed as Bears fought their way back in to the game with a score of 183. The skip doled out congratulations where due and made lots of noises about defending lower totals than this etc etc, but the fact was we were 40 short.

The message however was once again plain and simple. We field aggressively and create pressure. We started reasonably enough, but the intensity never quite reached the heights we needed. On balance at the end of the match, you would have to conclude that our fielding was not good enough and the loss of Shaky on the first delivery of his sixth over to a broken and dislocated finger attempting to catch a bullet of a return catch didn't help. With Jamma unable to bowl, that meant it was down to the skipper and Saeed to bowl out the innings with a twirl in the middle for Doug.

Saeed bowled well with nice loop and occasional sharp turn, and prised out 2. It should have been three as DW stumped their (to be)centurion as he stood well out of his ground, and could have been more still as Bledlow's batsmen hit in the air with little control but singularly failed to find a fielder. Taggart toiled away manfully, bowling a good line, but gave up asking for LBW after having the last of several appeals turned down for one that was missing both off and leg (on account of the fact that it was hitting middle), and had the opener effectively called back by the same umpire when he appeared to be walking for a catch behind. Heads dropped, as did the standard of the groundwork.

Their young opener finished 100 not out, and whilst you need a bit of luck to get a ton, it's no mean achievement. It is however a lot easier to achieve when you are immune from danger at one end.

My mother (more of a pragmatic woman than a religious one) had a fridge magnet in our kitchen that declared, "Lord, grant me the patience to accept the things I can't change, and the resolve to change the things I can." We would have done better had we adopted this philosophy earlier in the innings. Perhaps spoilt by our performances earlier in the season when we ran through several sides with comparative ease, we have too often of late been subdued in the field when things have not been going our way, and in a 6 hour game, we're unlikely to have it all our own way. We emphasise to the kids on a Friday how important the spell in the field is, since that is your chance to shine as a team and as a unit. It didn't happen for us this week. For the remainder of the season, we need to get a bit more mongrel, as the Aussies would say, and our batsmen need to start to appreciate that the opposition bowlers are not all going to be cannon fodder. A 150 ball 50 from one of the top order would have made it a different game.

In the end, we weren't good enough on the day, which is disappointing, because we know that we are good enough.

Closing questions from the afternoon: Why would one of our potential bowlers not wear his bowling boots to take the field? Who taught Saeed the RolfeDive? How many people asked the current Mrs Mac for her malteser cake recipe? But most importantly, does a wounded bear lie down and die, or stand up and growl at the world a week later? We're still second in the league and 38 points clear of third.

It ain't over!

The captain of the 2s accepts full and sole responsibility for the contents of this report.