

MATCH REPORT

Summons sets world record for byes saved ??

Ridgebears 2s 132ao (48 overs)

Horspath 3s 134-3 (42 overs)

Lost by 7 wickets

"Never seen a wicket like it! Swinging one way, jaggging the other! Two paced! Variable bounce, one scalds your ear, one stubs your toe! Good bowlers, **very** good bowlers!" *and then incredulously*, "And then after an hour, turned into a road". Etc etc etc. Such were the pronouncements of the top of the Ridge order as they trudged back with frightening frequency as Beer and Du Plessis (he of the Horspath du Plessis's) tore into the top our list. Well I suppose at 34-7, you need to think of something to explain it away.

To be fair, on pre match inspection, the wicket looked like the setting for a bowler's wet dream (it was around the same time that we first heard the call of the Greater Gloved Summons faintly in the background, "looks a tricky wicket to keep on"). So much so, that Taggart, a man with a speech impediment so severe that he is incapable of saying the words 'we', 'bowl' and 'will' in the same sentence, declared instantly that if he won the toss, we were not going to bat. As oft times said and proved however, he is a useless tosser and we were duly inserted.

New (!?) recruit Umar, played six text book defensive shots to the first over, without ever bothering the path of the ball through to the keeper (who seemed to take them with little fuss, which is strange because it looked a tricky wicket to keep on). At the other end, Shaky left a couple, missed a couple and hit a couple straight to fielders and this pattern continued for 5.4 overs before the Shakster pulled one through mid on for 2, then clipped the next one to square leg for the same return. This opened the floodgates, but unfortunately in the wrong column. The young bowlers (they totalled 33 years between them), were incensed that anyone would have the temerity to score runs off them and started seemingly dismissing batsman at will. Wickets tumbled. Doug seemed a little unlucky to be triggered LBW and Malik was uncertain as to whether he had made contact with one that the wicket keeper did unbelievably well to hang on to (because as someone had mentioned, this was **not** an easy wicket to keep on). Saeed cost Shaky a pint by smashing the ball 70 metres for a six over the longest boundary, however that ball more than doubled his total and the next one turned it into his final total. James 'Hairbear' Goodband, our latest recruit from the U15s went in at 8 and clearly hadn't read the script as he repeatedly leaned back and cracked the bowlers over cover for a succession of 2s, but alas, he quickly succumbed for what was at that point the top score of 14.

MS Donnelly had arrived at the wicket at the dismissal of his brother, and was still there, making batting look not quite as difficult as some had managed (although it was still a devil of a wicket to keep on), and this prompted a change of opinion amongst the previously dismissed batsmen. "It's flattened out", "it's turned into a road", just my luck" etc etc. At the departure of Hairbear, Ady, who had asked to go down the order a bit (no doubt so he could get into a place where he could prepare

himself for keeping on the universe's most difficult wicket) finally entered the fray at 10. When making the request, he had expected the affirmative response to mean 6 or 7, however the skipper had sold it to him as a key role, putting some steel into the tail. Having bought that, the skipper then opened negotiations with him on a prime piece of Lithuanian time share.

Motivation however comes from the strangest places. With Matt batting nicely, Ady found a bit of form and having looked completely out of it at 34-7, when he finally fell trying to smack the off spinner out of the ground, he and Matt had added 44 to take us into the realms of respectability at 97-9; just three runs short of a batting point that had looked less likely than the Titanic being commissioned as a cross channel ferry half an hour previously.

The skipper, fresh from his supporting role to the Guv'nor's heroics the previous week, came out to join MSD, and the batting point was firmly targeted. A couple of overs later, it was secured, and with Matt growing in confidence and Taggart proving that the edge of the bat he had borrowed from Rolfey was far more effective than the middle of the one he had given up (although how that can be proved when he hasn't used the middle of his old one for four years is a mystery), another batting point was secured at 130, before a rush of blood to the head saw Taggart castled and Matt left high and dry on 46n.o.

Whilst 132 is hardly the pinnacle of ambition, it still has to be got and frankly we were just grateful to be taking tea between the innings rather than at the end of the match.

The highlight of their innings was an outstanding performance behind the stumps. After Matt beat the bat with the second ball of the innings, on tossing it nonchalantly to slip, Ady pointed out that 'that wasn't just an outstanding take on a nightmare wicket you know. That was 4 byes saved!' On this basis, he may have saved us up 200 runs on the day. Several times, he was forced to jump up to 3 feet to his left in order to affect a full length dive to his right and take the ball in one hand. Unfortunately, on several occasions, this got Alan's grey matter ticking, stringing some irrefutable logic together. "'e's 6'2" an' 'es taken it at full stretch! That must be a wide then"

We bowled OK, and fielded well, (although we were indescribably slow getting through the overs), but once the openers were past 50, it was an uphill struggle and they got there for 3.

We probably won't face a better bowling attack this season, nor a wicket that changes character quite so much in an hour (and for sure we won't play on a harder one to keep wicket on), so all in all, it could have been worse. In the bar afterwards, Ady asked why there wasn't a specific symbol for the scorer to use to signify 'byes saved'. There is mate. It's a dot!