

RIDGE STUTTER TO A DRAW UNDER SHADOW OF THE MOON

Malcolm in palm-greasing scandal

Bicester and North Oxford 201-7 43 ov

BRCC 2s 158-9 43 ov

Match Drawn

Rain, on and off and more rain, on and off.

The start was delayed by... rain, which meant the late-arriving RolfeDog only missed one over. Explanation? Well the helicopter that landed on the adjacent golf course shortly afterwards had clearly messed up its bookings. Yes, we were playing away.

It was in this first over that one opener hit one down the leg side and failed to walk claiming contact with his hip. Capt McTaggart said something about having a two foot extension on his hip. Naturally it was off his bowling.

We had a fielder in shorts. Was it Malcolm on Safari? No it was Patrick Digby making his debut. Not a safari perhaps but he must have felt as though he was stranded amongst a herd of wild animals.

Henry Donnelly – most amusingly called High Definition by Malcolm all day – was also playing his first league game of the year and got plenty of life out of the wicket having the other opener caught at slip. Later Dickers also caught a sharp one at slip but decided having caught it, to throw it on the ground. We put it down to premature celebration.

Time wore on and they got past 100 but what do you do when you are desperate? You call on Malcolm who eventually ended up with three wickets all remarkable in that they involved two slip catches by Dickers who had by this time adjusted his celebrations to throwing the ball upwards not downwards, and a stumping – or even a –stumping – by Matt Donnelly, for whom a nickname based on his initials was too challenging for someone of Malcolm's limited intellect.

After one of the wickets Taggart came up with a motivational statement to beat his season's best of "Look if you don't like the field we have set, just get on with it, it might not be the *right* field, but it is *a* field".. with some ramble about building pressure which ended with "The pressure's on, putting the pressure on". Answers on a postcard please. (That's what we used to do before email and Facebook).

These wickets were interrupted by a rain break during which BRCC players put on all three covers. We came out having reduced the match from 45 to 43 overs and after a bit it rained again, hard and steady so that the ball became wet, then soaking, then soaked, then completely soaked. It was at this point that, in order to demonstrate the impossibility of gripping the ball Malcolm asked RolfeDog to feel his palm, the purpose being to demonstrate that after a while even a hand can

become soaked through too. This RolfeDog did with a certain amount of reluctance but did admit after to a sort of tingling sensation and to some relief that the relationship did not go any further.

The rain continued. "This is mad What are we doing out here?" asked RolfeDog of their captain who by now was umpiring. "Your captain wants to stay out" was the reply. RolfeDog asked to see if there were any hairs on McTaggart's palm.

They progressed up to 201 for 7, Dickers getting one wicket and sacrificing his knee in the process and there was a debut run out for Patrick, cool as you like. The ball had to be dried before each delivery clearly extending the life of the game.

As B&NO approached the end of their innings our other debutant Dom, hared about the field in pursuit of the ball like a rabbit out of a burrow (can a rabbit "hare" about?) although we later discovered this was because Malcolm had asked him whether he would like to feel his palm...(or his pain?)

Tea was extended because it rained a little bit. Just a little bit. Heaven forfend that after the Ridge had stayed out in a monsoon bowling with a piece of soap, B&NO would want to do the same. So they managed the covers carefully, and miraculously a large bag of sawdust that had not been seen all afternoon appeared and when all was in place the covers were slowly removed.

Some calculations estimated the game would end at one minute past midnight which would cause a problem because Helen brings Malcolm his Ovaltine each night at ten and she was not at the ground.

RolfeDog was caught one-handed down the leg side by a keeper who generally otherwise could not catch. Malik and Doug put on nearly fifty before Malik was bowled for 21. Having been run out in the last two matches Doug seemed to have decided that he would do all the calling regardless of where the ball went or who was running with him. Clearly he was not to be run out for a third successive match.

Doug continued doggedly but wickets fell too regularly and in any case Dickers' knee was too bad for him to bat.

We still had a outside chance when Matt joined Doug who pointed out they should give it a go. Matt hit the ball firmly at cover, called for a run and Doug was comfortably run out, yes for the third match in a row. He made a worthy 57.

Matt was seen collecting the winnings of a bet, under cover of darkness later that evening.

Patrick stayed in for an over or two and Dom aimed a few blows at and over mid-wicket. Matt made his top score of 17 before, with 8 wickets down getting out with one ball left of the match.

Having already seen to Doug, Matt has now revealed an extremely well advanced sense of humour because his dismissal with one ball to go meant that Dickers who had been resting his knee during

our innings was forced to hobble out to bat to face one ball with all eyes on him to hopefully save the day... which he did.

Matt was seen collecting the winnings of a bet under cover of darkness later that evening.

We trooped off having at least saved the game but over 40 runs short and nine down. As a result of the efforts of both captains we did all get a good game and at 8.20 the match ended in the best sunlight of the day.

By a fluke combination of Astronomy and Pythagoras, the Cherwell League Secretary happened to be watching the end of the match which we discovered on leaving the field. His response was a big grumble about timekeeping and a very reluctant handshake with RolfeDog. The outcome at the time of writing has been an email exchange with the League who have deemed that everyone's efforts in playing a game are worthy of investigation.

Quite rightly the League has Playing Rules which also involve timings, however in Division 7 if there are no official umpires there is no one to 'manage' the match' Remember how at Oxford, tea took over 40 minutes and we waited for player-umpires to appear and then for the match ball all of which probably cost us victory?

Anyhow there is a chance of a happy ending: McTaggart might get locked up. If so we will send Malcolm to visit him and they can compare palms