

MATCH REPORT

Why do they call him “The Guv’nor”?

Sandford St Martin 2s 128-10 41 overs

Bledlow Ridge 2s 129-9 42 overs

Ridgebears win by 1 wicket

There have been drug treatments, therapy sessions, exercises at home, gentle suggestions and downright threats, so when Taggart actually won the toss, he took a deep breath, went to his quiet place and his spirit guide (who looked a lot like a Ridgebear with a very large glass of red) told him, “You can beat this Tourettes, you are a strong independent minded cricketer. Look deep inside yourself, the words are there”. He relaxed into the support of his team and said it.

“We’ll bowl”

It felt good. He had beaten the curse. He headed back to the changing room, looking forward to the smiling faces, the pats on the back, the congratulations, and was therefore more than a little surprised by the look of horror on Shaky’s face as he announced, “You idiot! It’s quarter to 1 and there’s only 5 of us here!” The treatment continues.

Those of you who keep abreast of these reports may wonder what the Shakster was doing there at all, being just 10 days into breaking in a new back. On Monday prior to the match, he had declared categorically that he needed another week of recuperation. On Tuesday at nets, he innocently enquired as to who the opposition were. “Sandford St Martin” replied the skipper. “The team that’s bottom of the league?” he enquired, yet more innocently if that were possible. “Yep”. He then gradually increased the pace of his ‘gentle try out’ until he was hurtling the ball down sufficiently quickly to prompt Dom to start building a bunker, declared himself fit and wandered off with a cheery “see you Saturday”.

By the end of the first over , we had more or less a full complement of fielders and Shaky, who had the look of a lion in a gazelle penn, and Taggart took the new ball together for the first time since the first game of the season (which had lasted a brief 6 overs over before the skies erupted). The man with the new back went for a few, but almost all of them off edges or false shots, and Taggart went for virtually none. Despite a number of early drops and nearlies, they both picked up a wicket and at 12 overs, an admittedly unambitious SSM were around 30 -2. The skipper gave way to Vaj, who was tidy and presented Maunder the elder with a catch behind, and he in turn gave way to Saeed, who knocked back the middle peg with his first delivery. Shaky had grabbed a second with a slower ball that completely bamboozled the opposition’s chairman, and eventually the skipper managed to surgically remove the ball from his hand to give MSD a trundle.

Matt struggled with his rhythm a little early on and produced a bit of a mixed bag. When they were bad, they were very bad (or to put it another way, 4), but they were quick and getting quicker and a top edged hook that was on the batsman rather sooner than he expected, produced a caught and bowled, and a couple of quick good length balls that the stumps saved Maunders the elder from having to stop, reduced SSM to 80-8.

Now that sounds like a pretty decent effort having inserted the opposition, and in many ways it was. There had been at times, a good energy in the field and a couple of good catches held, but if we had all been at the same standard as Scott and Maunders the younger, by this point, we would have bowled them out for 60. There were reasons why we hadn't been right, and these were discussed (which is not quite the right word as it would imply more than one person talking) in the changing room afterwards, but on this one, let's just say that what goes in the changing room, stays in the changing room.

But back to the fun. The skipper scented a couple of cheap tail end wickets, so brought himself back on up the hill. And promptly got carted around the park. In fairness, the batsman had little clue where most of them were going, but going they were. Matt was getting a bit more rhythm, but we leaked a few extras as well and by the time MSD had cleaned up 9 and 10 (to finish with 5-32), somehow they had eked it up to 128.

We turned straight round and Dan and Shaky went out and were successfully negotiating the 8 or so overs prior to tea (another excellent Summons production), when the SSM bowler made the politest of enquiries of the umpire, which the wicket keeper laughed off. The umpire however had a slightly less amusing interpretation and adjudged Shaky to be out LBSLU (leg before the square leg umpire). This brought together a brace of Maunders for the second week running, and they progressed tidily enough to 34, before Dan played inside one that left him a little and had a coming together with his off stump. Dave made note to self. 'Watch for that, do not get out to the same ball your brother did'. He and Saeed added another 14 before he got out to the same ball his brother did.

Saeed was playing rather more circumspectly than usual, as he had indeed promised the skipper in return for this elevated entry into the batting order. I make the point only because to look at the scorebook, you could be forgiven for thinking it was a bit of a whirlwind, with his 32 coming from just 8 scoring shots, including 2 huge sixes over point. From the other end, he watched Ady play a cracking shot to a fielder who took a cracking catch, and Scott play an excellent leave (in the sense that he left it really well whereupon the ball reacquainted itself with the off stump). Malik looked more like his normal self with the same number of scoring shots as Saeed, but for 8 less (you can do the math), but a couple more soft dismissals, saw the skipper walking out to bat, twitching uncontrollably and muttering repeatedly "should have said we'll bat, should have said we'll bat"

He was met at the wicket by a calm smiling little bloke whose sage in depth tactical analysis and advice ran along the lines of, 'it'll be fine'.

There were 28 overs left to bat, 20 runs left to win, and one wicket left to lose. To win the match, they would need to produce the second highest partnership of the innings.

And they did.

And **that** is why they call him the Guv'nor.