

Bledlow Ridge 1s v Long Marston 2s (Away)

Saturday 5th September 2015

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Ridge snatch last over victory from Jaws of defeat

Saeed is the unlikely fielding hero

Ridge players in 'sledging own teammate' scandal as Rory flukes a ton

ShakEy shocked as RolfeDog is hailed comedy genius

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BRCC 1s	230-6 (53 ov)	
Long Marston 2s	226 all out (46.4 ov)	<i>out of a total 47 overs allowed</i>

Won by 4 runs

Yes as the team's average age has reduced in the last few weeks to somewhere under 50 we have found ways of winning.

A lot rested on this game. Such are the permutations that three or possibly four teams could be relegated at the end of the season. Nuts isn't it? Battle through the season to say 7th of 10, only to learn that because a club in a high league in another part of the south of England wins their last game it relegates teams into the top Division of the Cherwell League and by virtue of the Trickle Effect – which we shall call the Doppler Effect - you find you could go down.

Bored already? I know I am.

For us, starting the day in seventh position, it was important to beat Long Marston or get the better of a draw with them. Surely lowly Horspath 3s in eighth, could not beat promotion near-certainties East Oxford?

The whole X1 was going direct – that's a recipe for disaster. Rory and Matt were in one car following Taggart. Well that's never going to work is it?

"How come those two do everything at breakneck speed until they get behind the wheel of a car and then they can't keep up" complained our own Jackie Stewart. We had just

one person at the ground at noon for a 12.30 start. Then Taggart arrived with one player and Tom the Scorer; Rory and MSD were nowhere to be seen.

Somehow 10 players and a scorer materialized, Matt and Rory complaining about a traffic jam due to some old sod blocking the road with a broken down ice cream van. Matt incidentally is presenting the latest challenge to Shaun's "Paintbrush-on-the-Head" hairstyle with his own imitation of Beaker from The Muppets.

Talking of muppets, Tom the Scorer briefly became our 1st X1 captain. On enquiry from the opposition captain I pointed past Tom towards Taggart who was inspecting the large damp patch on the wicket. The short-sighted opposition captain shook Tom warmly by the hand before learning he had mistaken Tom for our own Statler, or was it Waldorf? Needless to say McTaggart proved himself a useless tosser once again and we were asked to bat on a wet one.

As I warmed, up Jonah said encouragingly: "I hope I never become old". News came that Lloyd, the missing player, had a puncture. He *literally* had a puncture. We pictured him, in his SpongeBob SquarePants ice cream van, flying in circles around the inside of this vehicle while deflating at increasing speed until he came to rest at a normal size.

Talking of 'rest', Shaun, whose Saturdays largely consist of sleeping off the effects of whatever he was doing the night before, switched his engine to 'idle' and settled down to sleep in the dressing room.

McTaggart said helpfully, that it would be good if we drew, better if we won, but not good at all if we lost. We all gave thanks.

Saeed "I am comeeing" Ajmal was the surprise choice as opener and he responded by opening the throttle and hitting the first ball of the match for four and in total all of the first eighteen runs ... and rather quickly. This sort of cheerful positive approach is entirely unacceptable, so RolfeDog on Nought at the other end having not yet engaged first gear, had a quiet word with the umpire who responded by giving him LBW at the first opportunity much to RolfeDog's scarcely-disguised satisfaction.

MSD came in but did not open the choke. He faced five balls, contrived to hit the fifth onto his back leg so that it somehow rolled on to the wicket.

Enter Rory. Showing scant regard for the basic principles of batting, like playing yourself in, knocking the ball around for a while, playing out the odd maiden over, he made a hundred. Well 111 to be precise although it should be said that by the following morning according to the League Website he was still adding to it and was up to 117.

As you can imagine, RolfeDog nursed him along with advice along the lines of "Careful not to hit your next six *over* the tennis court ninety yards away as we may never find the ball" or "I'll make you look really good today by blocking everything at my end".

The down side of this last plan was that the rest of the team back in the pavilion just did not understand the strategy.

You may recall from last week's report that for the first time in a 52 year career I was actually sledged by an umpire while batting. This time, it was by the rest of my own team in the form of ironic applause, first on reaching 10 then 20 then on hitting my first boundary - no not of the season, of the match.

The voice of ShakEy could be heard as Ringleader, with the unmistakeable snigger of Sniff in accompaniment. SpongeBob SquarePants was in on it too having finally arrived courtesy of help from Dougal, Zebedee and Bill the Mechanic, in replacing the offending tyre. In fact the whole team was ridiculing their senior pro who realized that his life's work had been wasted. The 'whole team' with the exception that is, of Shaun, of the Dead, asleep in the dressing room.

It did not help my case that Long Marston's third team match on an adjacent pitch was virtually all over before yours truly got off the mark. They had bowled out Bletchley 2s for 16 and knocked off the runs for no loss, all before you could say 'RolfeDog hasn't got out of first gear.'

Support came on the pitch from Lee Beesley, Long Marston's captain who said "I bet you've scored more than all that lot put together?" Never a truer word was spoken: reputation salvaged.

Rory's hundred was simply boring. A barrage of fours and the odd six, followed by another barrage of fours and the odd six and then more of the same. Tedious and predictable. RolfeDog in contrast, played a subtle mix of forward defensives, back defensives, blocks and leaves, the odd late glance for no run, a very rare and occasional single so that when that boundary came it was exciting and newsworthy. Cue sledging from the boundary. Shaun of the Dead was still asleep in the dressing room.

Rory brought up the club's only hundred of the season with yet another predictable four and received about half the volume of applause as RolfeDog had received for his solitary boundary. Lee Beesley tried getting inside RolfeDog's brain (so he said later) with a few comments about the running between the wickets. If he had, he would have found lots of funny jokes in there (See below).

Finally, finally, Long Marston thought of bowling a couple of rank bad balls; RolfeDog went into turbo mode and actually hit the first to the boundary but this was too much. On receiving the the second, he succumbed, having made, now wait for it, 37 of a season's record partnership of 150 of which Rory chipped with most of the rest.

Hari joined Rory. Or as ShakEy would have it Harvey-Burger-King joined Roy. Last week these two had smashed the ball everywhere. This week they played the same shots but unfortunately Hari 's engine stalled and did so mostly without making contact

with the ball, ultimately falling to the leg-spinner. When we get Hari off the mark, he is unstoppable.

By this time Shaun of the Dead had emerged from the dressing room and was astonished to learn that Rory had made a ton in the ten minutes or so he had been asleep.

SpongeBob SquarePants made a dashing cameo with three boundaries and then Shaun of the Waking joined his dad at the wicket. Not for the first time this year Shaun made important runs at the end. The last ball of the innings was to have a significant bearing on the outcome of the match.

Only two wides had been called all innings. This last ball was called as the third, and the extra delivery was despatched to the boundary by Shaun who then sleepwalked all the way back to the pavilion for tea. Five runs, in effect off one ball. For his part, Shakey's average is now up to 1,445,832.

We had to endure the first of many boring team talks from Captain McTaggart who envisaged us having the opposition about 10-0 after six overs. After two overs with the score at 15-0 this was up for review. Matt applied the cruise control and bowled one of the only two maidens we delivered, but Shaun was in mega-wide mode. Having bowled one through second slip, he made an effective adjustment, nearly breaking RolfeDog's thumb at first. Then he produced a smart manoeuvre reminiscent of the home game when Shakey managed to injure both his finger and his head in fielding a single shot. Shaun sent his dad, today's wicketkeeper, diving down the leg side and hit him on the bounce second bounce.

RolfeDog checked for damage and announced that he could see no brains at all, a no-brainer in fact, so we carried on. Hari said: "Rolfe you make very funny jokes". As ShakEy crouched for the next ball his non-impaired brain dwelled on the enormity of this compliment. No remark of this nature had been made in ShakEy's favour all season. The next ball was bowled, then ShakEy simply said to Hari: "Don't ever say that again". With his sharp observation, Hari had truly hit the spot.

Hari replaced Shaun. This perceptive man bowled with accuracy, beating one of the openers in particular numerous times and often complimenting first slip on his wit. At the other end Saeed had each opener dropped. Despite some good bowling we could not apply the brakes, Long Marston got up to 120 for no wicket and we were in trouble. We needed a road block.

McTaggart had decided it was time for some filth and brought himself on. Despite clearly being out of MOT he induced an error from opener James Cockbain who was **caught**, by that great purveyor of funny jokes and then Hari soon **bowled** Miscampell. That's Miscampell, not Miss Campell obviously.

Hari and RolfeDog were like a comedy double act. Talking of which, cue complicated instructions from McTaggart on how many points we might get when we drew the game, a game which seemed a certain Long Marston win.

He also urged us as last week, to ‘attack gently’.

The third wicket partnership rattled along and took them to 184, when Sniffer Dog snaffled a spinning skier...**caught!** Next ball, No 4 smashed one in the air to MSD who... dropped it... and smirked at Rory or Roy who by now having replaced his namesake Hari, or Harry-Burger King, was the unlucky bowler.

Time for a sharp exchange between the No4 and RolfeDog after the former had had a go about Rory’s fielding. Rory was tired having made a century and the opposition batsmen was only on 20 not out, all of which amused ShakEy who was rubbing his sore head at the thought of a sixty-year-old sledger.

Soon S Robinson – not ‘here’s-to-you’ Mrs Robinson obviously – cut Rory firmly to backward point where Sniff rolled back the years and took a sharp low **catch**. This was gentle attacking at its best. Three catches from Sniff in two matches, all good ones. He said that in the two matches of his return he had taken three catches and scored no runs – mind you he had not been out either. How interesting.

The score was by now 201-3 with just 30 wanted off seven overs with No4, A Wells in good form. Game over surely.

But if Hari had tightened the screw, MSD applied the brakes with an over with a wicket and which conceded just one run. He had replaced McTaggart who had taken himself off for a long overdue service and MOT... and to protect his bowling average of course.

RolfeDog continued to make very funny jokes.

Every run counted. SpongeBob SquarePants made a sharp handbrake turn on the boundary to save a certain four.

More lengthy mathematics followed from McTaggart who seemed oblivious to the possibility of a defeat, or a win for that matter.

Roy again. He **bowled** Mr Wells who then had to walk past him off the pitch – the perfect setting for some verbals: - “Don’t do it, don’t do it” called the master of diplomacy Mr McTaggart and Rory kept his thoughts, whatever they were (although having spent much time in the company of Australians they probably weren’t many) to himself.

Soon it was 3 overs left, 11 wanted, 4 wickets left. Can’t you just feel the tension?

MSD to bowl: fully revved up he was bowling a fine spell at the death (“Matt of the Death”?!) as he had in the previous fixture and against Aston Rowant and on other occasions. An over conceding just one run. Just ONE run.

Rory took a wicket, **bowled**. Long Marston were still winning the game easily but then it happened; they panicked over a quick single and quick as a flash, our wicketkeeper purred into overdrive and pounced. The time-honoured method is for the keeper to remove a glove and throw the ball at the wicket with the bare hand. Not ShakEy, who actually put on an extra oven glove, racked what was left of his brains (very funny joke!) and managed to somehow hit the far stumps from 20 yards without hitting the batsman. **Out!**

“If we don’t let them win and we don’t win, it will be a draw if it’s not a tie” declared McTaggart helpfully in Team-Talk-of-the-Season-Number 205”

Last over, 6 to win, 2 wickets left. MSD bowling. “Let’s stop them getting six runs, or even five” said McTaggart, perceptively. A big swing and a miss... **bowled!!**

Last man in and a play-and-a-miss. Six wanted off four balls. A quick single, MSD pounced, hit the stumps...umpire’s verdict... not out! Five needed off three.

The next ball was hit towards the long-off boundary where Saeed was lurking. Well Saeed does not really ‘lurk’ – he smiles benignly in a happy sort of fashion. The batsmen were bound to come back for two. “C’mon Saeed” we yelled, “Take the handbrake off!”. “I am comeeing, I am comeeing”, called Saeed as he bounced around the boundary in pursuit of the ball, picked it up and hurled it in to MSD who did the rest. After a long pause, the opposition’s umpire gave the last batsman **run out** and we had snatched a win by four runs. That last ball of our own innings which was worth five runs in effect, had made all the difference.

A team called Cove had lost their game which was good news under the Doppler effect. Long Marston now below us relaxed, but we got home to find that remarkably Horspath 3s had beaten East Oxford. In sixth position we must surely be safe, but Long Marston have ended nervously in eighth, awaiting the effect of other relegations from outside the Cherwell League (it’s that simple!). Had we lost, it would have been us in eighth. It was that tight.

Let’s hope Long Marston don’t go down. Great club, great ground.

Rory with a lucky hundred and – four wickets – narrowly sneaked Man of The Match from Shaun of the Dead for his fine knock and his all-round sleeping.

A great way to end the season. As we drove home we all hooted at some unfortunate van driver who had broken down. It couldn’t be SpongeBob SquarePants again could it?

Another very funny joke from Rolfe.

Geoff Tombs is on Gardening Leave

