

Bledlow Ridge 1s v Twyford 2s – Saturday 18th July 2015
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Ridge sail to victory with Shaun at the tiller

**CAPTAIN JUGGLER MACTAGGART IS
OUT-JUGGLED**

**Despite Thomas Cook batting at 8, Twyford do not
travel well**

BRCC – 231-9 (53 overs)

Twyford – 198 all out (43.2 overs)

Won by 33 runs

Availability looked dodgy. Juggler Taggart juggled his team and with the bait of a red wine persuaded Shakey and Shaun to play. They are a job lot. For a while there are no available Drydens then two come along at once.

Twyford, below us in the league had beaten us at their place and last week chased 253 v Long Marston 2s for the loss of one wicket with James Gaskins making 168 not out. He and RolfeDog practiced assiduously in separate nets before the game.

We were put in to bat, Geoff said we didn't want to be 30-4 like England at Lords the previous day and we responded by being 16-4.

RolfeDog tried playing tennis with the second ball and was out caught off the back of his bat which, interestingly he said was something he had once done facing the brother of a future test cricketer at Stanmore in 1984. Diesel followed then after a brief pause and two boundaries, MSD, then Brooksie.

Enter TombsDog to join his mate, chum, mucker BirdDog. They began to pull us out of a hole. BirdDog gave up calling his partner for quick runs as they were all declined and strangely BirdDog ended up straining his hammy.

Geoff mixed defence with attack although it is sometimes hard to tell the difference, one big shot prompting second slip to ask him whether he did not think it might be time to consolidate. Geoff replied that he had always been that shape.

With Geoff's departure for 21, we were still hopeful of reaching 100 or more and at least getting one point before losing the game.

Taggart had juggled the batting order a bit, we were after all missing six batsmen from the top five for this match – I think that's called a vulgar fraction. After a small visit to the wicket from Dakes, in came Scott to join Birdy.

Scott played sensibly. In fact he played with unusual intelligence. He played responsibly. I think I am beginning to hallucinate.

Birdy fell to the finger of Umpire Knapp for an invaluable 39 and after another piece of batting-order juggling Shakey joined Scott in the 38th over and together they dragged us to a highly respectable 181-8 still nowhere near enough but we had a fighting chance when Shaun went to join his Dad. A lady on the patio started shouting "Well played Rik" – "Well

done Shaun” before running inside to hide all the wine glasses.

None of the opposition were old enough to have heard of the Blitz but they got one as Shakey hit the bowling to all parts of the area between square leg and mid-wicket for boundary after boundary. Shaun at the other end had taken some of Scott’s Sensible Medicine and ran like only a man carrying a sail on his head, can. He also collected 10 not out himself in an invaluable partnership of 53 with his Veteran Dad whose 79 not out came in only 15 overs. Marvellous effort that I thought at the time, one that had graduated to Shenshational by the end of the evening.

The pre second-half motivational team talk by Taggart was as boring as usual and was finished by BirdDog saying “can I just say something important” at which point we all ran off.

The previous week Messrs Gaskins and Elkinton had scored 168 not out and 70 not out. Mr Gaskins took guard, faced one of Dakes’ wides, then blocked a straight one in shock, faced another wide and then hit one that was not a wide, in the air to RolfeDog who caught it.

Well that’s what you’re supposed to do isn’t it?

Clearly this is such a rarity that the whole team started to run in RolfeDog’s direction faster than RolfeDog could run in the other.

I, RolfeDog, started having flashbacks. It was like a terrible dream: the moment five years ago when I caught one off Ferret’s bowling and he ran towards me, arms apart, lips puckered, remains one of the most terrifying moments of my life. But here was an entire team doing much the same. Imagine ten amorous Ferrets if you can.

I guess I should consider myself fortunate that that I got away with a few slobbery kisses. There were two exceptions however as I was held in a long and most unlikely embrace by TombsDog - probably not my first choice and not usually his. It was one of those great moments in sport, transcending Freddie Flintoff and Brett Lee in the Ashes in 2005 although I expect Brett Lee was lucky enough to get through his without tongues.

When it all calmed down, Shakey, by now clearly on heat lifted RolfeDog clean off the ground, the team then checked each other for lovebites and reflected that the two players who had practised in the nets before the game had both made two ball ducks.

Next it was Mr Elkington's turn. He really threw the bat but not before Brooksie had stumped him off Captain MacTaggart's bowling. His bat made its way to the pavilion before him in just a few easy steps, while TombsDog in the manner of a Third Umpire, confirmed to the on-field umpire that his decision was the correct one. The umpire was just grateful to get away without a hug, or more.

In came Lee Hodges to bat, in came Captain MacTaggart to bowl, there was a nick off the bat and there at first slip was BirdDog to take a sharp slip catch low to the ground like someone sweeping a bug off a carpet, which he does for a living. In that moment his entire carpet-cleaning career became worthwhile.

Opener Matthew Smith managed to survive until he had made six of the first 26 before missing a straight one from MacTaggart which seemed to be too many coincidences rolled into one: 26-4 and enter Nathan Perna to join Sam Lyon 63, "Lyon 63" being the logo on the latter's short-sleeved sweater. There never having been 63 players in a

cricket eleven (a particularly vulgar fraction) I assume this indicated something like "Heinz 57" or "Catch 22".

Mr Perna had earlier taken 5 wickets with a deadly combination of swinging, seaming and cursing. He now identified the short boundary, took aim and blattered his first ball from MacTaggart into it. He repeated the trick second ball and Dickers commented "he's beginning to like you Skip as he did not tell you to "f*** off" after that one.

Mr Perna made 63 and at this point Twyford were comfortably winning the game. But MSD to the rescue and Perna was gawn, bowled. Enter Sam Roberts who took the same liking to the short boundary, albeit left-handed (his batting not the boundary). It was nevertheless felt by Captain Juggler that Twyford needed to be kept up with the run rate so Geoff was brought on and duly obliged with a over that yielded 14 runs and some damaged branches when one of his balls was hit high against a tree... or at least that's how it felt to Geoff.

Still, we were losing. Saint had been at the orange squash again and after drinks MSD said he could not bowl for a bit as his tummy felt a bit funny. Cue more juggling and another return for MacTaggart and enter Shaun at the top end.

Shaun set his mainsail aft and tore in on a so'-westerly. Five overs 2-17. His slower ball did for Mr Roberts : 166-6. This boy Shaun could travel far and right on cue Thomas Cook came in to bat. A journeyman cricketer, Shaun sent him back on a short-haul flight to the pavilion.

By now MSD had had some of Peter Rabbit's camomile tea and was feeling better, so with him bowling in tandem with Shaun we had bowlers whose combined ages were lower than any other player in the team except Dakes and Scott.

But we couldn't break the eighth wicket partnership, well not until Ian Perna got wheelspin after setting off for a run and ended in a muddy ditch as that man Shaun ran him out amidships.

Sam Lyon 63 was still there but not for long, bowled for 46 by MSD who was by now on speed – MSD on LSD?!

Four overs to go. The last pair at the wicket. Time to go for the jugular (geddit?). Captain MacTaggart juggled the bowling again – in other words he brought himself back on. Could we bowl them out?

On the second ball of the 44th over the world momentarily stood still. Twyford's No 10 hit in the air towards Scott - Scott of 37 intelligent runs. A dolly catch. Scott opened his mouth wide as if to catch it there. It went in to his hands and time stood still. Unfortunately the ball did not. It left his hands. It entered his hands again and time stood even stiller. It left a third time and cool-as-you-like Scott caught it on the umpteenth attempt and in his final act of the day Juggler Scott out-juggled the master-juggler Captain MacTaggart and we had won. Won. Won.