

## MATCH REPORT

APRIL 18, 2009

V&A v. The Invalids

THE PITCH WAS WET IN THE MORNING AND BATTING was going to be tricky. An important toss, which your captain, Bird N, lost [there were two other Birds playing – Tony and Tom]. We were put in to bat and struggled. Even Richard Woolhouse. Patrick Cobb tried to get the ball away, but failed. He had a bit of previous with The Invalids, which added some spice to the day. We were about 20 after 10 overs, the long and sodden outfield not helping. But Cobb went and suddenly Richard opened up and with 16 in one over things looked respectable. But wickets fell and no-one scored any real runs before lunch apart from Richard, whose eventual 50 plus amounted to a sizeable chunk of our lunchtime 85 for 5. Dennis de Caires was caught, after a stunning 6, by an amazing if flukey catch at long on, which was a turning point in our fortunes. Woolhouse buggered his back which slowed his hitting and led to his holing out.

Sarah turned up with lunch and tea, washed up and went home. What a saint.

After lunch, as always, there was a collapse and some wally shots and calling. Adam offered a catch to silly-mid-off which was dropped. He then had a rush of blood, shouted ‘No!’ and started to run [!]. Bowden sent him back, but Adam does not turn on a sixpence and he was neatly run out by a sober throw. We ended up with a meagre 112, not even having completed our 35 overs. We needed 130 minimum.

The Invalids started rather badly. Or, to put it another way, very badly. Dennis bowled like a dream and an inswinger with his third ball hit middle stump. Two balls later occurred one of those memorable ‘champagne moments’ – a mixture of grace and farce. A quick de Caires delivery was snicked to Steffen at gully who spilled it. But as he was cursing his clumsiness the ball rolled down his back and landed on his left foot. He instinctively twitched the ball in the air where Tony Bird, at slip, anticipating some action had moved to his right and snapped up the ball one-handed just before it hit the ground. A fine inswinger from Martin, another from Dennis, and a wicket off his first ball from Peter Holmes [caught Bowden at mid-off], saw The Invalids stumble to 10 for 5 [Dennis’ figures were 7 overs, 3 wickets for 3 runs]. As their actor manager Richard Durdon understated – ‘not a good start’. But...we have been here many times before and f\*cked up. The pitch was drying by the minute and their numbers 6 and 7 were more than competent. We had run out of Dennis’ overs. Richard was to return [after medicinal substances to ease the pain] but was not to bowl at pace, and our part-time bowlers were out of practice. It was clear that a sixth wicket would probably do it, but difficult catches went down. Tony Bird’s heroics in the first over were not repeated when he missed a rather easy catch at mid-on, although by this time The Invalids were probably safe. An earlier missed run-out – when Steffen threw hard but waywardly – was perhaps our death knell.

They won with 2 overs to go. A thoroughly deserved win. Despite Richard Woolhouse's heroics we rather self-destructed after lunch, but their opening bowlers pinned us down and later batsmen were mostly out forcing the pace.

The Invalids had their 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner the night before but, unlike the V&A, they clearly eschew strong drink before major games. They appeared remarkably keen. Even the older men, of which they have a reassuring number. We hope this will be a regular fixture.

If golden moments like Dennis' second wicket and a Woolhouse straight drive should be celebrated, so too should truly duff moments – like Olly letting the ball trickle through his legs for 4 on the mid-wicket boundary, and Patrick Cobb [winner, V&A 2008 award for 'Most appalling dropped catch'] lazily bending to stop a ball that had passed him some minutes before.

The next game is May 2 v. Midnight CC. Martin Bowden is organising [mbowden146@hotmail.com]. Please let him know if you can play. He will post players on the website. I am lecturing on a river-cruise to a genteel and octogenarian clientele, just the sort we might enjoy playing, though we will need our best team.

Nicky Bird