

## **MATCH REPORT** May 7, 2005

### V&A v. RICKY HOLLAND XI

THE NEW TERM always brings surprises, bright creosote on the walls, doors on lavatories, a new matron to replace the dead old one. And Saturday at Stonor was no exception - brand new nets that a county ground would be pleased with. When the surrounding grass has grown they will look less obtrusive. Some muttered that chicken wire around the boundary is more pressing, to stop the wasted minutes searching vainly for balls in the rough. We lost 3 on Saturday.

Ricky Holland XI were a very pleasant and appreciative (of the view) bunch. Ricky Holland himself turns out to be a bloke of no distinction who doesn't even know a team's named after him. Strange. Olly Bamber and their jolly captain (an irritatingly good wicket keeper) decided on a 35 over game which for some of us is a long day, when the match really starts at 2.30 (drink had to be taken before the game ended). Ricky Holland went in first and scored at 6 or 7 an over. Our fielding was pretty woeful, this being our first game (doesn't actually get much better), save for a fantastic throw by Nixey for a run out. Ed Churchwood's Fotherington-Thomas display on the short boundary will not be mentioned. At one stage a frustrated Roger Smith shouted 'Hinge and Brackett', possibly a memo to self re: a trip to B&Q, but possibly also a reference to Bird and Fraser's antics behind the stumps. Smith himself has lost a yard or two and generously allowed their batsmen to run 4 while he loped reluctantly after a ball that sat near the boundary behind him. Fraser was moved to square leg. A mistake. Their best batsman hit one hard at shoulder height. Fraser let out a queeny squeal and dived for the turf. At least Bruno used to pretend to go for it.

The man Fraser missed went on to make 120. They had a long tail and it was as well for the game that he did. Perhaps Fraser had that in mind when he ducked.

The pick of the bowling was Roger Smith, with one ball that would have bowled a proper cricketer; James Nixey bowled a marvellous destructive inswinger (plus some shite), Linthwaite got a deserved wicket and might have had a stumping, Will Clarke bowled some good if erratic stuff and got a wicket, Bowden did well carrying an injury. Adam bowled accurately with restraint, and gave little away.

They reached 217, a rate of 6.2 an over. Seemingly daunting, but there was the short road boundary to consider. Sarah Jenkins arrived with tea - and sandwiches! - washed up and went home on account of the cold, before we could fawn and do the unctuous bit. So a belated thanks. Thanks also to Julian Stewart who came all the way with his disability to umpire, and got abuse for an LBW decision for his pains.

Olly and Adam opened and set a furious pace at 7 an over. Olly was going well, striking a drive straight out of the manual, but then misjudged the line and was bowled middle and leg. Adam was whacking it to all boundaries for an invaluable 37 until given out LBW controversially. Ed Churchwood did not impress his distractingly beautiful German girl friend by being bowled first ball. 'Fuck-up merchant' does not translate well but she got the gist. Andy Fraser and Martin Bowden saw off some serious bowling before Martin was caught splendidly at deep gully with the score at 80 odd. Peter Linthwaite had to leave early for a party in Greenwich, which his wife insisted he attend, so Roger kindly dropped down to make way.

By now Andy's eye was in. Last season he scored 100 not out with a succession of drives and pulls, his golf game having opened and freed his swing. He, we, did not think he would repeat the feat at his age and in his condition. But suddenly sixes and fours were hit to both long and short boundaries. He reached 50 with a spectacular 6 to mid-wicket. Meanwhile Linthwaite was striking the ball hard and well, mostly forward of the wicket, straight driving for 6 and off-driving fours. We were well up with the run rate. Andy was now cutting and glancing, as well as heaving, only one chance through slips being offered, and that deliberately struck with venom. Andy's second century of his long career came with a

flourish to long on, his 100 coming in 17 overs and 65 minutes. Old men recalled Percy Fender, another Surrey man. Others were reminded of Colin Milburn, similar style and build.

Linthwaite had announced that he had to leave at 7 at the latest (he came in at 6.45), but it was way past when he was still thrashing the ball to near his 50. Peter's wife Jane, our Treasurer, is firm but fair and the divorce will be amicable. The court should note that Andy and Pete's match-winning century partnership came in just 40 minutes. Only 40 runs were then needed, with 6 wickets in hand. Peter was run out two short of both his 50 and victory. Smith came in but it was Andy's drive behind square to the boundary that won it, with five overs remaining. 436 runs had been scored, a tribute to some fearless batting and Tony Fisher's pitch (and the short boundary). If they, like us, dropped catches, none were dollies but we may have been assisted by some occasional wayward bowling. Next week's captain should note that Clarke, Nixey, Smith, Morris did not face a ball.

Olly managed the day with skill and tact, even acting as taxi driver to some of the opposition. Please let him or Sarah know if you can play next Sunday (v. The Rainbow, 2.00 p.m. start).

So...the new term has started well, the seniors - Fraser, Linthwaite and Jacot - showing how technique and clean living can prevail over dodgy knees and befuddled middle-age. By next week-end they should have recovered.

Nicky Bird