

## MATCH REPORT

SATURDAY SEPT. 10, 2005

V&A v. JACOBITE CHANCERS

THE DAY LOOKED DODGY, weather-wise but there was no rain at 10.30 a.m. so we went. We have been lucky with this fixture in the past, snatching victory in the last over, assisted by a 12 year-old girl (Maria Bird) and an old man of 84 (Tom Bird Snr.) and – in a memorable game – tying a game off the last ball when our bowler had bowled a wide, which the umpire was about to signal, when the idiot batsman snicked it to the alert keeper (Bird, N).

We lost the toss and batted in a (flexible) 35 over game. Ed Black and another almost equally good bowler opened for the Chancers and had us tied down. Rob and Sean did a fine job getting through the first overs, although it was impossible to score more than 2 an over. Even that was impressive. Rob was bowled by a beauty and Sean went soon after. 25 or so for 2, after 10 overs. Martin Bowden looked about to cut loose (having been dropped twice) when he spooned one up – this was a feature of the day, the pitch offering variable bounce and pace inviting a dolly to the short field.

Chris Moore also appeared settled when he too was caught, neither blocking nor whacking. But Mike Morris and Olly Betts pushed the score along, Mike in particular indulging in some ferocious but stylish hitting. He was, inevitably, caught, for a useful 27. Simon Foster had just scored two fours when he succumbed; James Nixey swatted a lovely boundary and then he too departed. Linthwaite was run out before facing a ball but not a trace of an oath passed his lips. There was a sense that he might have made the run if a) he had run his bat in, b) backed up c) been 20 years younger.

But Olly was still there and at the end he and Bird N grabbed a few and made the score – 128 (I think) almost respectable. Olly reached 24 not out. Ed Black, who plays in a Corinthian spirit, offered us another 5 overs to amass a better target but it was declined, skipper Bird feeling that another 30 runs would not compensate for the extra overs they would have to reach the total, given their 12 young, virile batsmen. Of our team, only Hugh, Olly's dad, did not bat, but seemed somewhat relieved.

Lunch was provided by Sarah - who joined us, which was appreciated. Tea was the usual modest affair with budget biscuits, provided by myself.

The clouds swirled ominously when they began their innings but there was still a hint of a sun peeking through. The star of the bowling was indubitably Mike Morris, lean, mean and very tall – from my position crouching nervously behind the wicket about 7 foot plus. He soon rattled out the first four batsmen. He bowled 7 overs for 9 runs, with 3 maidens. Sean bowled nicely, as did Bowden but he didn't get the swing he normally does. Olly had several tight overs, until his last.

But the innings was notable for the catch of the season, nay of the decade, perhaps the century. Mike bowled a fast lifter, which was square cut as fiercely as I have seen a

ball smitten. Foster stood at point. 0.38 seconds later the ball was firmly in Foster's left hand, caught purposefully and cleanly inches off the ground. What made this remarkable, and will have old men reminiscing on their Stanner stairlift, is that it was no fluke – I could see him watch the ball from bat to hand. It put Freddy's, Ed's and Rob's recent miracle catches in the shade.

The Chancers had stuttered to 60 or so for 6 when tea was taken. A few overs after play was resumed a storm of biblical proportions – less the locusts and boils – erupted and there was a genuine fear that the lightning would find Mike Morris. We watched the rain pour down and decided to call it a day.

Our last game curtailed, but an interesting day. Would we have clinched an unlikely victory? They were nervous, their best batsmen were out (apart from Ed) and we had overs to come from Pete and Chris. It was going to be close certainly.

So the season ends. The date and place of our annual AGM and jamboree has yet to be decided but please suggest a place if you know somewhere that is central, cheap (better still if they don't charge corkage) and tolerant of erratic and inappropriate behaviour.

Nicky Bird