

MATCH REPORT

Sunday May 22, 2005

V&A v. The Nashers

THE STORY OF SUNDAY'S GAME is simply told. Roger Smith was captain and elected to field in a 35 over match, chasing runs having paid off in the first two games.

A glance in their dressing room showed they had a long tail. It is always comforting to see a posse of gentlemen of advanced years or girth. Of course apparent senility and decrepitude can be deceptive. Look at Andy Fraser. Some gnarled old professionals never lose the wristy cut. Tony Fisher, Stonor's groundsman since Mafeking, can turn a ball both ways, and with more venom than even our own Mooro, whose clever donkey drop dismissed their eleventh man last week. Fisher was spinning before Mooro was conceived (Raffles Hotel, Singapore, 1965).

They had a South African who made 130 before being bowled leg stump by Tom Bird. We missed him twice - two half-chances, a caught and bowled (Olly Bett) and a very difficult catch at mid-wicket (Olly Bamber). Huge hits went to vacant space where with a bit of luck a fielder might have stood, and with a bit more luck the catch might have stuck. Patrick Cobb, in his Harrovian sweater, looks the part, but he is not perhaps a natural long-on and uncannily the ball found him.

So the South African piled on the sixes, supported by some sound partners. We got a run-out (new boy Ed Tupper – who also bowled one of their better batsman with a sly full toss). Roger bowled as tightly as ever, the umpire was generous with Will Clarke's deliberate wide balls, Adam got a deserved LBW.

We lacked a bit of variety – no Chris Moore or Linthwaite, although Moore did turn up in a sorry state after a wedding the day before, with one of the bridesmaids. He appeared to be confused and not in a state to play.

Our fielding was in the main rather good – what a difference having the likes of Ed Churchwood, Tupper, Bamber, Bird T and Olly Bett makes. However, just as some of us veterans were flagging their captain announced that luncheon would be taken after their innings ended. 35 overs in a damp field seems an eternity, particularly for this wicket-keeper unable to share (again) his amusing anecdote about Roger Smith and the caravan because the slip cordon has gone to the boundary.

They made 210, a target therefore of exactly 6 an over, very gettable. But during Mrs. Jenkins' excellent lunch the rain came. A look at the pitch confirmed that it was unplayable. We discussed with their very pleasant team and captain the possibility of a re-match (down to Sarah) and they asked if anyone of us wanted a game at neighbouring Medmenham this Saturday (speak to Sarah). They coughed up £10 for the abandoned, tea-less game with narry a whinge, which was much appreciated. A discount requested by a canny V&A stalwart was refused. We are now paying Stonor £110 per game (when we started it was £25) and match fees only just cover the cost of

pitch, lunch, drinks and tea. Mrs. Jenkins much appreciated help from Adam's mum and a very nice girl, whose day consisted of washing up and watching rain.

So...bummer of a day. Some people went off to The Rainbow and found it open. But your correspondent thought 3.00 p.m. too early for whisky and the traditional post-match grope with the landlady.

Nicky Bird