

## MATCH REPORT

SUNDAY SEPT. 3, 2006

V&A v. THE HERMITS

A FINE DAY, after a miserable early morning. We were within a minute of cancelling. A call was made at 9 to ascertain local pitch and sky conditions, and the prognosis was grim, rain looked set to persist. But we took the gamble to play and it paid off, by 11.30 blue sky appeared over Stonor and the sun came out for the rest of the day. Marvellous.

Olly Bamber captained and he and Terry Blake, the Hermits' skipper, decided on a 35 over game. You might have expected the day to end at 6 or so, given that we started at 12.15 but no, what with the ball getting lost and the opposition captain frigging about with field changes we didn't finish until 7. The last 5 overs of their innings – they batted first – were both wearisome for older players, and expensive. They scored at 10 an over.

They started slowly. And by lunch were only 80 odd for 2, scoring at about 4.5 an over. Their major batsman and bowler had retired hurt with a hamstring injury which was a blow for them. He had been called for a needless quick single by his captain. The poor man seemed perhaps a trifle unfit, even a little porky, unlike the professionals of the V&A whose physiques are ever the envy of opposing changing rooms. The low point of our fielding was the 4 dropped catches of the morning, one by Rob Noble a stunningly easy catch at mid-on, another off Adam's bowling by Martin at fly slip dipped and fooled him, one regulation chance to Andy at first slip should have been held – and another to Andy, a very difficult one off Adam again, turned the match. It was snicked by William Bevan who went on to make nearly a ton. Andy held it for an instant, juggled with it, and just failed to hold on to it. If he had succeeded they would have been out for 120 and I would have been in the pub at a reasonable time.

Best of the bowling was undoubtedly Jake Warman, his 7 overs only going for 18 runs, with one deserved LBW. Adam bowled well, and should have had 3 or 4 wickets (but for dropped catches), James Nixey had a couple of errant overs but two good ones, Olly Bett bowled quite tightly, Freddie Motley bowled William at the death but by then it was too late, the damage had been done. Martin Bowden picked up 3 wickets with his in-swingers but got clobbered to the legside boundary by William until he found a better line outside off stump.

They scored 199, a target that seemed out of reach. But Adam and Olly Bamber began briskly, until Adam was caught in the deep for 12. Jake came in with Freddie as his runner, an unenviable job that Freddie did with consummate skill and unselfishness. It is easy to get into a bugger's muddle with a runner, with everyone charging in the same direction, which happened a couple of times until Jake twigged that he's meant to stand still. Jake's batting was superlative, and when Olly Bamber's excellent innings of 37 ended, he was joined by Andy Fraser and the speedy run rate

continued. At 20 Jake was dropped behind, a rather simple catch and potentially costly error.

Things were going merrily when Andy decided to wallop some indifferent bowling, to post 12 off an over to make the rate comfortable; he attempted to pull a bowl on middle stump and was out LBW. Then everything rather fell apart. Martin Bowden, who looked in form, was given out LBW by William Bevan (who was injured and couldn't field). A V&A umpire would have spotted the front foot way down the pitch and the ball's legside direction (shades of Tim Squires' umpiring eccentricities last year). Freddie was out first ball to one on the wicket, and although James Nixey smacked two fours for a quick 12 runs, Olly Bett was out almost immediately afterwards and then Jake, rather misreading the situation and looking to score boundaries off every ball when only 6 an over was needed, was caught in the deep by Gerry Bevan, he of the dodgy bowling action and abrasive ways. Jake had scored 67 and had made the match interesting. But although Nicky Bird hit a boundary in the penultimate over, it was brother Tony, who had just come in after Alistair Warman had been run out (he is not the speediest), who faced the first ball of the last over with 9 to win. His eye was not accustomed to the fading light or the ball but he hit a fine drive off the first ball, but which was stopped by the bowler. If it had passed him N. Bird would have had 5 balls to score 8 runs. But it was not to be and we were 6 short of their total at the end.

A very good day, however. Jake Warman was our Man of the Match, with a special thanks to Freddie for doing all the hard work of running. Next week we have the young, virile men of the Jacobite Chancers on Saturday, so please let me or Sarah know if you can play. She will return to catering duties, thank goodness.

Incidentally, several players wondered why Rob Noble did not open, as is his custom, and score at his trademark 1.3 an over. The reason is that he had a fall getting out of the bath (it being a Tuesday), and hit his head which bled profusely. Baths are dangerous things for old people and the Health & Safety Executive advise installing a pulley or handle to lever oneself out. Rob said that the fall had affected his fielding, had made him groggy and rather dim-witted, but he can be reassured that no-one noticed any difference.