

MATCH REPORT

V&A v. LONDON ERRATICS

SAT. JUNE 20, 2009, STONOR

A DREADFUL CRASH on the M40 meant a three-hour drive to Stonor for some. Bummer. Typically, the police closed the motorway to photograph bits of glass and tyre marks, but only after traffic had built up for 2 hours and had backed up 20 miles. They do things better in France. And probably provide *crudités* and a crisp Sancerre.

We didn't start until well after 1 and although Bird N. – temporarily standing in for the marooned Richard Woolhouse (captain) - won the toss and might have preferred to bat, he put the Erratics in as they were only 5 at that stage, hardly a quorum for fielding. We decided on a 30 overs game because of the late start.

Sunil and James Nixey opened the bowling and did extremely well, doing just what was required, keeping the runs down while avoiding a hatful of wickets which, in the circumstances, would have been unfortunate. But then Sunil bowled a beauty shattering the wicket to dismiss one opener, and tempted the other into a top-edged hoick to Chris Moore fielding at fine leg, who seemed to misjudge the thing until diving late to take the catch. James bowled 3 excellent overs until going to pieces in the fourth. Strange how these things happen but it happens to the best - I once saw Bedser bowl 4 wides in a row, something James did on Saturday, but there the resemblance between them ends.

The Erratics innings was anchored by an impressive 68 by Berrigan, finally dismissed off Martin caught behind, Bird N. making it look more difficult than it was, as someone rudely commented. Their skipper Nasser, a very fine bat and superlative wicket-keeper, was caught brilliantly by Freddie Motley at point off Richard, reminding some of his 'catch of the century' in his very first game 4 years ago, when a mere 14 or so. He is a first class cricketer in every sense.

Richard then bowled Nasser's 13-year-old son, a fine embryonic cricketer, with a nasty, fastish ball that would have bowled Bradman. There were mutterings of 'bastard' by Sarah and Adam's mum on the boundary, appalled that Richard could have been so cruel and ruthless. But he did not get where he is today by being soft on small boys.

Adam bowled their excellent no. 5, Neal, and Richard Heller was run out from a stupendously accurate throw by James. A four off the last ball saw the Erratics creep to 149, perfectly respectable. Their no. 2 batted twice as they only had 7 players. They were very apologetic but who are we to complain when we too struggle to raise a team on some days. I know a couple of people who would like to play but you would not wish to spend a day with them. If you know agreeable people who can both play and eat peas with a fork sign them up.

We had superb roast beef for luncheon thanks to Sarah's culinary efforts. Unfortunately she left the green salads behind and your Committee felt obliged to

speak to her about this dereliction. Thank God our resident vegetarian Peter Linthwaite was away, otherwise there might have been violence.

The weather had been mildly threatening on occasions but the sun shone for much of the time. When Lucinda turned up she mentioned that it had poured just 4 miles away.

Fraser and Morris opened our innings dashing, at a brisk 5 an over, reaching 60 without loss, after a flurry of elegant strokes from Andy and some big hitting from Rupert, who was eventually caught and bowled after being dropped rather embarrassingly by Sam, substitute fielding [incidentally, Sunil fielded *all* day for both sides!].

Andy was in terrific form, perhaps unstretched by the bowling but giving no chances – apart from two very good LBW appeals by spinner Chris which I turned down, possibly unfairly. Batting at no. 3 Richard commented after the second (quite convincing) appeal – ‘I thought it was plumb’ which rather undermined my adamant ‘Not Out!’ Their keeper, Nasser, is a different league, standing up to fastish bowlers and still picking up the leg-side ball. He stumped Richard for a pacey 46. Richard thought he might not have grounded his foot and walked, umpire Moore having rejected the appeal. Richard’s graceful and generous exit allowed Freddie Motley to come in and hit a beautiful 20 not out, which included some powerful on-drives hit with perfect timing, and a classic back-foot straight four. We passed their total after 23 overs, Fraser sweeping a magnificent 6 off his last ball to reach 62*, having carried his bat. As is traditional he promptly announced his retirement on grounds of age and infirmity.

We finished at a reasonable time and most retired to the Rainbow, although I had to return home and eschewed the pub whisky. Nick Jenkins turned up in his French sports car, normally a sign of a mid-life crisis. Apparently he was seen to be quite intimate with Jean, mine hostess in the pub, so perhaps the car is for her.

The next game is on a Sunday in two weeks. Let us know if you can play. The London Erratics are a very pleasant team and the day was fun. James Rivington, who runs the team, was for the first time in his life on holiday [in Italy] during the cricket season. He has a new lady friend. Several Erratics were alarmed at the precedent, and amazed at his self-sacrifice. Perhaps it was a *Lysistrata* situation, or he had a 20/20 lined up in Milano.

Nasser’s son is going to be a really good cricketer, his bowling is precocious and his batting correct - he reminds me of the cautionary tale of farmer’s son James Hunt of Stonor. He used to play with us as a small boy of 12 or so, because Stonor CC refused to give him a game. But when he was 14 or 15 he was poached by Turville who recognised that when he grew he was going to be terrific. Which now, aged 30 or so, he is. But he is lost to Stonor as they did not give him a game. Like the Jesuits we need to get them young...

Nicky Bird