

## MATCH REPORT

SUNDAY AUGUST 5, STONOR

### **V&A OLD PROS v. V&A YOUTH**

First a word about the previous week's invitation game in Sussex. Tony Bird had organised a game at Madehurst near Petworth, on a charming rural ground shaped like a bowl, against the actor Richard Durden's team, The Invalids – so called because they were formed by two convalescing British soldiers in the desert in WW2. An invitation V&A side came down for the day and the night – at Tony's house nearby (he and Tom were absent owing to an obligatory family wedding party).

The pitch was soggy and the ball held up, so catches to mid-off and on predictably dismissed their leading batsmen cheaply (they went in first in a 35 over game because we were a quorum and they weren't at kick-off time). Ed, Robbie and Olly Bamber all caught good catches in the deep. Sam Tyson was too good a bowler and was taken off after 4 wickets. Martin Bowden bowled as economically as ever, until his last over, and got one dismissal with a peach of a fast off-break. Simon Foster was a revelation. This former Young Player of the Year is in his late forties by the look of things, and hadn't played for a year or so ('laziness' explained his loyal wife) but he slung the ball down after his customary three pace run-up to remarkable effect, claiming 3 wickets. Your correspondent 'caught' what looked like the Catch of the Decade behind the sticks but succumbed to an unusual fit of honesty and suggested it just might have hit the ground. They were all out for a meagre 105.

An easy target you might think but with boundaries at a premium because of the hill the ball needed to ascend, runs were hard to come by. Nevertheless, after cheaply dismissing our first three batsmen, Ed Churchward and Martin Bowden brought us to within 35 runs of the total – Ed scoring with abandon and imperious disdain of conventional stroke playing for an invaluable 29.

But then things went badly wrong and despite a huge 6 from Chris Moore he found himself with Bird N at the end with 6 runs to win and no-one left to bat. After a snick or two we needed 2 to win. Bird N then late-cutted towards the vacant third man position and we squeaked home. An excellent tea was provided and further hospitality was enjoyed at Tony's house, with help from Sophie Bamber, Lucinda and Martin Bowden on the BBQ. Strong drink was taken when the wine ran out which did not help the ping pong or Martin's ability to climb the stairs to Bedfordshire – he achieved the ascent with assistance from several sherpas. Next day, remarkably, he felt able to play cricket for Acme in Kent. He got stuffed.

The **V&A Old Pros v. V&A Youth** has been a fixture for some years, but was inserted at the last minute when Stonor CC pulled out. It is tribute to the health of the V&A CC that we raised 26 [!] players for the game (playing 12 a side). Bird N, captaining the Oldies insisted on a 30 over game because we didn't start until nearly 2.30 (and finished at 7 so I was right, 35 overs would have been excessive). The Old Pros were all there on time and thus fielded. Youth stated well with Olly Bett and Case Jr. looking sound but unable to score freely against Dennis. There was a dearth

of bowling in the Oldie side which was why Rico was forced to play with us against his will (he thought, mysteriously, that he qualified for Youth). But we got away with several overs from Cobb P. and from Noble (who introduced us to his charming and attractive new lady friend from Oz – we only hope she doesn't seduce him back to Melbourne whence she comes, like Roger Smith's new wife has done, to our grievous loss. Rob's girlfriend even knows about his theatrical habits and is not deterred). Dennis was the pick of our bowlers. Catches were dropped and held, but one held by Olly Holroyd-Pearce in the deep was a beauty. Olly Bamber, Ed Churchward and Stuart Fraser all made runs but it was Jamie Cobb who was the star with a fine 58\*.

They reached 158, not enough if precedent was to go by. But the Old Pros stuttered horribly with Rico and Rob out cheaply. Andy and Patrick steadied things, with Andy dominating the bowling, at one point square cutting 3 successive boundaries (and 14 in the over). But when he was out (caught Nixey for 28 very quick runs) things slowed alarmingly. Dennis was dismissed trying to up the run rate, Steff was out for 2, Bird N tried unwisely to steer a ball on the wicket to leg and despite Ben's efforts (a useful 15) Patrick Cobb's inability to score (he stayed for 18 over to make 14) meant that we were struggling and well behind the rate. Umpire Fraser gave Patrick out stumped in what would have been a controversial decision if it had not put everyone out of their misery, Patrick included, who acknowledged that he couldn't hit the ball for toffee. In the end Pete, he of the athletic build that was, and Mooro were faced with an impossible task but even so you might have thought Chris could have made a better fist of things than to amble down the wicket for an easy-peasy single, stop to admire the view or pick daisies or his nose or whatever, adjust his dress, admire the kites and the cloud formation and then find himself run out when Douglas Bader even now would have made the run with minutes to spare.

Next game is the Hermits, the team with the fearful, in every sense, Bevan family of chuckers and pacemen. Tom is getting the team together and we already have, I think, TOM, JAMES, ANDY, DENNIS, OLLY BETT, OLLY HOLROYD-PEARCE, ROB, ED, OLLY BAMBER, RICO... Sarah has agreed to do lunch.

I am away in Lucca for the opera season but will be cheering you on from my estate, and will tune in to CNN for news from Stonor and, hopefully, a stunning V&A victory over that louche mixture of drunks and ringers and substance abusers.

Nicky Bird