

## MATCH REPORT

V&A v. THE CATCHITEERS, SUNDAY SEPT. 16, STONOR

‘CATCHES WIN MATCHES’ but rarely can a side at our level have caught 7 such stunning catches as The Catchiteers did on Sunday. It was the difference between us – we dropped them, they caught them. Some of our ground fielding was pretty wallyish too, not to mention names like Rupert. One could argue that 4 overthrows carelessly conceded proved fatal. As a sign of the Catchiteer’s unwonted brilliance even Rob Noble – hitherto a girlie, a Fotherington-Thomas in the field – not only stopped balls but dismissed our potential match-winner, skipper Dennis de Caires, with a fine, hard catch at mid-on.

We played a 30-over game because some of us wilt in the field, and last week it was getting pretty dark at the end when we played 35. As it turned out some of us were so bugged – Dennis (back), Bird (bust toe) – that the end when it came was merciful, with the Radox bath and the quick trip on the Stanner Stairlift to Bedfordshire beckoning.

They batted first and although we had some excellent bowling in Alec Waterlow, Will Tremlett, young Alex Padmore (two good wickets), Dennis, and Fred Price - with James Nixey and Robert Taylor sharing 4 overs a little expensively (but Robert bowled their best batsman) - they scored 190, which looked too good. Rob Noble (who seemed immune to Andy’s sledging) anchored their innings with 47 (bowled Tremlett), scoring with snicks and edges but with a few handsome sweeps and drives, and Holme ensured a fast run rate (eventually LBW to Alex) with a quick 44. Nixey went for 17 in one over, his confidence not helped perhaps by Andy Fraser’s stage whisper to second slip, when James came on, of – ‘F\*ck me, watch out, this bloke’s all over the place’. ‘I heard that’, shouted Nixey. There was one good catch in the deep off Dennis, but otherwise we did not distinguish ourselves, balls invariably trickling through legs for 4. In retrospect our attacking field failed to capture wickets and we might have stopped a few runs with sweepers on the boundary.

Lunch was provided by Sarah returning to her duties. I hope you were all suitably grovelling in your appreciation so that she’s minded to turn up next year, serve lunch, wash up, tidy up, serve tea, wash up...for some reason there aren’t many candidates in the wings eager to usurp her role.

We opened with Fred Price and the willing Rupert, who will always open if asked, even if it’s not his natural position. We started rather well, both scored boundaries and kept well up with the run rate. Then Fred whacked a ball to cover which looked a sure 4 until a magic hand plucked it out of the sky. Umpiring at square leg I debated a retrospective no-ball for the ball being high but thought this might cause a little friction. Enter Andy Fraser who scored three beautiful 4s in succession before running out Rupert. Bird hobbled in with his broken toe, the bowler chucked a yorker at it, and Bird hobbled out again. But Dennis came in and after his usual fanning about for a couple of overs started smiting the ball with real venom. Fraser was all elegance the other end and a 50 partnership gave us a glimmer of hope – only to be dashed by a freakish slip catch, Andy snicking one to the keeper who spilled it...into

the hands of first slip. Rob Taylor came in, drove languidly to the cover boundary but succumbed next ball trying to do the same thing. Meanwhile Dennis was having problems with his back. Having walloped 24 off one over, he faced some innocuous slow bowling from their captain Olly, bowling which two overs before he would have murdered. But his back had gone and the over was a maiden. This was crucial. When Tremlett came and went (caught behind) for a useful and quick 14 we needed about 40, at 8 or 9 an over. Dennis, unable to move his feet to the ball, was caught by Rob (he drops those when playing with us) for a terrific 43. Cobb, not everyone's choice in a run chase, walked in with his smart Butterflies cap and Free Foresters sweater (to some opposition ribaldry) and walked out again having edged a difficult catch to first slip, who caught it one-handed.

But Nixey and Alex Padmore, undaunted, ran briskly and made the target possible if improbable, until Nixey was caught going for the big one. Last man Alec Waterlow entered. A six from Padmore left us needing 14 off the last over. Padmore snatched a single, as did Alec, then Padmore smacked a 4 to long on, then 2 and another 2, leaving 4 to win off the last ball. The ball was a good one and Padmore holed out to mid on. We had lost by 3 runs, but a splendid day's cricket. Alex Padmore, Rupert's godson, had so nearly brought it off. He is in the same house as I was at Winchester. He chose, generously, to spend a day's leave with his godfather playing cricket with old people. At the same age my preferred activities when allowed a day out were getting pissed and getting laid, so he is a better man than I was.

Our AGM will be in November, probably at Kew Cricket Club, the food at the usual venue, the Coach & Horses, now being indescribably filthy, the chicken nuggets at last year's do sticking in the memory and the throat. The Hermits held their end-of-term party there and the rack of lamb was inedible, being literally served raw. The Hermits drank the evening away. Lack of food led to inebriation which led to fisticuffs.

You will receive invites soon. In previous years we had magicians and silhouette artists. They were merely annoying. A tattoo artist was a failure, I have the mark to prove it, it looks nothing like Andy Fraser. Every year a guest speaker is announced who does not materialise, but this year we might get the chairman of Northern Rock to speak on 'Prudent Banking', Geoff Boycott on 'My Swashbuckling Years' or John Prescott on humility...

Nicky Bird