

MATCH REPORT  
V&A v. A FEW GOOD MEN  
STONOR, SEPT. 20, 2008

OUR LAST GAME. And a beautiful day, how different from recent experience.

The opposition, A Few Good Men [ex Durham University], whose first visit to Stonor this was, arrived promptly. We did not. They were a very agreeable and helpful lot, and busied themselves bringing out tables and chairs in the sunshine. Eventually we dribbled in, but Adam, Jake and Ally Fraser only made it – from Cambridge and Marble Arch respectively - just before lunch. Jake had waited vainly, through a mix up, for Cobb Jr. to arrive. Adam, so he said, had been enjoying the company of a few good men in Cambridge.

I mention the late arrivals because it had a bearing on the match. Martin Bowden, our captain and Alistair Metcalfe, their skipper, agreed – optimistically I thought – on a 40 over game. In the event the light persisted, just.

We won the toss and elected to bat – we had little choice as we were short. Richard Woolhouse and Jamie Cobb opened and, thanks to Richard's sound and aggressive stroke play, quickly scored 40 odd at 7 an over. At 48 Jamie was bowled [11] and Martin came in, struggled a bit and was out for 6. Cobb P. came in and out [2] after allowing a wayward bowler a surprising maiden, by which time our run rate had dropped below 4 and things were not looking rosy. Patrick never begrudges his dismissal if he can see it is for the good of the team. By now their weaker opening attack had made way for their strongest bowlers – including Alistair whose line, pace and bounce made batting difficult. Even Richard found runs scarce. But Dennis turned things round somewhat with some powerful hitting off their weaker bowler and by lunch we were nicely poised providing we could up the pace.

Sarah's lunch was as usual excellent. I have been criticised for facetious remarks about the recycled ham pie we endured some weeks ago but the comments were both unwise and untrue. The pie was lovely, or so the kites thought. Her tea was marvellous as well, scrumptious even. She threatened to resign after my libellous remarks so may I say now that I am prepared to eat humble pie (not the recycled one) and apologise unreservedly. She has lovely dogs too.

After lunch, as so often happens after a break, things rather fell apart. The problem with the run rate – we were aiming for a 200 plus total – prompted rash strokes. Dennis was caught forcing the pace [29], Ed Black and Jake Warman departed cheaply, and only Adam [14] rallied a flagging effort. If we had all been present at kick off a revised batting order might have put less pressure on batsmen to score quickly. Jake is not a number 7 batsman for example. That is not to excuse some poor shots, or deny some good bowling and catching. In the end we made 178, after a little late flourish from Peter Linthwaite. I had been a bit rude about Peter's constipated running when sitting in the pavilion, but Adam said he was actually lapping me when we were both in. Depressing to be outpaced by a grey-haired acupuncturist who holidays in Bodmin in a tent and goes to World Music festivals. There are rumours that he is a secret Rambler and goes to whist drives.

They started as we had, very quickly. They were soon 50 for 0. Ed Black bowled remarkably well and should have got wickets. Two LBWs were turned down and a slip catch was narrowly missed. This might have been a turning point. Martin did get an LBW, from a classic inswinger. But then took himself off after being clobbered in a looser over. Linthwaite tempted a good batsman into holing out, Shaun bowled a beauty for his wicket, and Jake – in a marvellous spell – bowled their captain and restricted them to 2 an over. Dennis was as tight as ever. Martin's tactic had been to wait for the evening gloom to descend before unleashing Jake and bringing back Ed and even if that ploy was problematical given they had edged near their target, it might have paid off but for two catches going down. The first was a hard chance to Adam at deep gully that went though his hands. The second was, it pains me to say, an example of doziness by Patrick that he will wish to forget. A nice ball floated towards him at point which seemed to take him by surprise. He awoke to find a ball coming gently his way, his specs fell off, then his hat, then he managed to knock the ball up and behind him. We may have lost anyway but this was a final nail. They eased past the target with an over or so to spare.

But a very good game and day, thanks to the sun, excellent opposition who play our sort of game, and of course Sarah who makes all this possible and provides such fine lunches and teas and even a bottle of Orvieto which I borrowed. Yes, it was me.

So our season ends, from the playing point of view with a whimper. I said to Ed before the game that we had a very good batting line up, but that was to invite nemesis, we rather cocked up. Apart from Dennis and of course Richard Woolhouse [69] who kept us in the game. His bowling too was laudable.

Our season has been the usual mixture of close games, victories and narrow defeats, and rain... We have had some memorable performances – Jake's bowling and Dennis and Andy's batting – and some pathetic ones too (Andy and Rob's fielding). There was a little cameo on Saturday, when the aging Linthwaite stooped to pick up a rolling ball at least 5 seconds after it had rolled past him.

Our AGM and Awards night has yet to be fixed but do come and enjoy being insulted by Andy or worse. It will be at Kew pavilion again and catering will be, I trust, thanks to the wonderful Sarah Jenkins who not only is a remarkably efficient Fixtures Secretary but has lovely long legs.

Nicky Bird