

MATCH REPORT

Sunday August 21, Stonor

V&A v. Nashers

A PERFECT DAY, cloudless, hot but not humid. Kites soared, deer gambolled, Bruno returned.

We lost the toss. The Nashers put us in to bat (because we were then not quite a quorum, but were later 12), in a 40 over game. Adam and Rob started briskly. 9 off the first over – an Adam trademark 6 to square leg – and continued apace. Then the rate slowed a bit until umpire Bruno took a hand and gave Rob out LBW. A controversial decision. Rob thought it incontrovertibly bad, and said so. There was some debate as to whether the ball had hit the front or back foot. The wicket-keeper didn't help Bruno's case by commiserating with Rob. Rob asked for a simple apology and got one, sort of, which seemed to defuse the situation, and later they were seen to exchange pleasantries, sort of.

The over rate was lamentable. Only 11 overs in the first hour. Their two openers had very long run-ups, and of course we had the usual delays looking for balls in the rough. Oh for some chicken wire...

We scratched along and at lunch were about 90 for 3, Andy Fraser, who had looked very stylish, being caught off a nothing shot in the last over by a shortish leg. The ball was lifting and a couple of us were caught misjudging cuts, like Olly Bamber. James Nixey's parents and sister watched him stay for three balls. Ryan Hamilton looked classy, even when he was bowled for not very much. But Adam scored a powerful, if chancey, 37 and skipper Martin Bowden steadied the innings with some sensible batting and sound blows. Bruno batted with all his old fluency, and umpire Noble selflessly turned down a tempting appeal. But we were in trouble. No-one had dominated and we were a meagre 122 for 8 or so, with only 9 overs to go when Ed Churchwood joined the newly arrived Will King. There then followed a match winning partnership of 75, with Will scoring 47 runs at a hell of a pace – including a cover drive that was the shot of the day – ably and ferociously supported by the big-hitting Ed. We reached 205, or so we thought, but forensic examination of our scorebook showed that, typically, things did not tally and we were rounded down to 200.

We started in the field rather impressively, Adam taking a wicket in the first over – good catch by Will at gully – and the next two overs also producing wickets, including a splendid reverse swinger by Ryan that deceived their best batsman. Things looked bright. A good catch by Martin at mid-on, a caught behind by Andy off Nixey, and we seemed to be coasting. But stuff happens. A dropped catch by Martin (of all people) and a wayward over by James and they were easily up with the run rate and had some 5 wickets left, with a tail of young athletes who could clearly bat. At which point you would not have bet on our chances. Particularly as they had a batsman at the crease who was both a powerful hitter and technically sound enough to dig out Martin's inswingers and the odd yorker. But his support was being eroded

by good bowling. Nevertheless, as long as their free-scoring batsman was at the wicket they looked to be more than capable of reaching the 201 needed for victory. The decisive moment came when he aimed a massive drive off Martin to the Henley boundary. It flew towards the circling kites. Olly was underneath but so were two others all looking upwards and threatening to collide. The prefect in Olly took control... 'Olly's ball!' he shouted and at the voice of command the others stood and watched as Olly held the catch and through the ball in the air, like what they do on the telly.

That was that. We were a nice blend of youthful vigour and gnarled old pros. A good game, a good day, with very pleasant opposition. Incidentally, in case you were wondering, they are called the Nashers after Malcolm Nash, the unfortunate Glamorgan trundler off whom Sobers scored six sixes in an over. Some of us know how he felt (Nash, not Sobers). Sarah returned and did lunch, which was appreciated by all.

The next game is on Sunday September 4, against our oldest opposition (in every sense), the Hermits, and the dreaded Jerry Bevan and his two fearsome sons. The last time we played them they cocked up the last over, needing 3 to win with two wickets left they fell to the fury of Jacot. I hear they plan revenge, and are lining up butch Aussies and Antiguans, men who make our meanest and manliest look like Larry Grayson. Adam will captain, and will need a full team and a good one. Let us know if you can play.

Nicky Bird