

CACCC vs The Wine Trade (declaration match)

Dunsfold, 12th July 2008

6-49. "Oh F. What the hell are we going to tell Maddocks?" was the spine-chilling thought on all of our team-members' rattled minds as The Wine Trade subjected us to a "Wine and Skittles" bowling display. Many of them seemed to have smuggled some of their merchandise onto the field inside their bodies, and the uproarious merriment lasted well into lunch-time as Chelsea struggled to post a 3-digit score. A polite suggestion that perhaps we should play a 4-innings game was despatched by the opposition and Chelsea quivered at the very real possibility that they would have to return to London and all change their phone numbers, lose the scorebook ... anything to avoid having to begin the tale ... "well you see David there was this fearsome opening bowler, no, well, two of them, and "

But let me begin at the beginning. Indian Sociable Democrat Suraj Varma won the toss and carried the win back with him to the dressing room, politely then enquiring of his players whether it would be OK were we to bat first (this on advice from Meteorologist McConnell, whose forecast and assessment of playing conditions turned out to be 100% inaccurate). On assent from his party and subsequent instructions one Gary and two Chrisses began to pad up and finally it was decided by Chris "Pregnant" Brown that he was going to be the chosen Chris, Mair could wait his turn, and that McConnell could face the first ball because the opening bowler looked worryingly fearsome. McConnell bravely fronted up to the first delivery kitted out like an exhibit from a WWI gas attack preparation drill, and batting as though his helmet was on backwards proceeded to survive a caught-and-bowled chance, which the bowler correctly surmised was not worth the effort to dive for, and next (ie 3rd) ball edged a drifting inswinger off his backside into the keeper's gloves. Brilliant.

Portrait-Painting Pin-up de Jager was then dropped off his first ball and by the end of the first over we were a shaky 1-0 (known as 0-1 in England). Brown was now to face the second opener, a Pict more than twice his height (yes David, really). He and Adrian finally managed to notch up a decent few runs, batting unusually respectfully and being caught off-guard many times by the swing induced by the pregnant black clouds overhead, and by the uneven bounce, both of which McConnell had skilfully predicted for the opposition's innings but not ours. Adrian was out for a gracefully-sculpted 13 and Armani Mair came to the crease, settled in in his usual style by disdainfully glaring down two balls and then playing a magnificent hook shot which missed the ball. His disdain extended into the next over where he allowed a ball to swing onto his stumps, not quite believing the curvature attained and he was out for 3, bringing a slightly bemused Captain Varma into play. By this time we were 3 wickets down for about 30, and feeling like it was not going to be a long day.

Now I have seen The Magician Varma in action many a time, pulling runs and wickets out of his hat like David Copperfield. But today he pulled out a shining golden duck and although he had the grace and aplomb to smile, we his flock were feeling decidedly hopeless. Our new recruit Tim "Surfie" Soper then came to the wicket and while he found the same difficulties we all had done with the swing initially, he quickly settled in and despite losing Chris B for an excellent 23 and Francis Palmer unluckily for another

gilded waterfowl, managed to bat through with Omar Ali until lunchtime, taking us from a perilous 6-49 at our nadir, to more like 6-80.

After lunch Tim and Omar continued their match-saving partnership and even when Omar was out after a punishing 31 off 36 balls, Mark Litchfield continued the work scoring a careful and most helpful 17, replete with the occasional classically-timed boundary. He was followed by a splendid 18 not out from Andrew Gow who - after Tim finally got out for a vital and at times electrifying 65 (off 84 balls) - managed to wrap up the innings hitting some valuable runs with our self-appointed number 11 Dominic Thomas (5), for whom while batting was of some interest, really looked rather more eager to bowl.

So we finished with exactly 200 runs to defend: a respectable total, especially considering the ridiculous start and some excellent bowling and catching from the Winos, as they called themselves. The weather had largely held out however which meant that the batting wicket was a lot better now than it had been earlier on, again flying in the face of Meteor Mac's pre-match pronouncements. We quietly extended Adrian's generous offer of £10 (to anyone who could manage to hit a 6 on the long boundary) to the opposition, and took the field with considerably less nausea than we had expected. Suraj called a huddle, all rather San Francisco I thought, and on realising neither he nor anyone else knew what to say in such a pre-conga configuration, we scattered ourselves in battle formation.

Well, any absurd thoughts we had had of this being easy were dispelled in the first over. The Australian commentator's delight Dommo Tommo bowled very well but anything remotely loose was punished by their opening batsman (the 7'9" Pict). Despite a first-ball breakthrough by Andrew Gow dismissing their number 2 (requiring a typically well-judged catch after a bovine "my ball" from the outer paddocks by DJ de Jager), the Pict continued to bash everything he could reach down to and they were running at a rate of around 10 per over for the first few overs. This despite some excellent seam bowling from our two veteran openers. Eventually the Pict hit one too many in the air and provided this live commentary as he watched his dismissal caught Brown off Gow: "oh, yeah, go on then, hit it right down his bloody throat..."

This gave us some respite, but their number 3 was a fiercely compit-t-v Kiwi who was run out early on except that a sudden cataract had descended upon the unfortunate umpire which prevented him from seeing it and so he and their number 4 proceeded to build a decent partnership. But then ... no, better, THEN C&B GOW!! A firmly-hit straight drive by the "Kiwi-That-McConnell-Dropped-At-Gully-Before-He-Really-Got-Going" just seemed magically to stick to Gow's casually-lofted bowling hand and we had them 3-something-not-in-their-scorebook, with Gow having taken all three wickets. Omar and Adrian then came on to bowl and Omar took a magical couple of wickets in his second over - one beautiful clean-bowled of their dangerous number 4 and the second, the very next delivery, a miraculous stumping of their number 6 by born-again-wicketkeeper Mair, whose cleverly-designed Armani sunglasses actually retain their darkness in low cloud cover and so virtually blind he somehow rolled the ball 10 metres in front of him into the stumps while the batsman remained oblivious he was out of his crease. More was to come later, a true champagne moment from our wicketkeeper ... but I digress.

The Magician changed bowlers and field placings very frequently so as not to let the opposition batsmen settle in. This very much upset one of their batsmen and we all felt great sympathy towards him. The movement of the ball was still important and so various exciting spells were bowled by Adrian, Chris Brown, Tim "Andrew Symonds" Soper and finally the Magician himself. Unfortunately our catching and fielding were not the best at times - although Dominic and Adrian deserve special mention for superb fielding all day - and their captain (number 5) and number 7 were able to build a hefty partnership, hitting enough runs to make the game look all-but-over by the time the first 5 overs had been bowled of the final 20 from 6pm. With some persistent and at times very fast seaming, Adrian managed to bowl out their number 7 and then as always, Suraj (known apparently now as "The Varminator") was able to produce a Karmic Breakthrough Moment and bowl their number 8, opening a fissure in the dam wall which needed to be attacked ruthlessly if we were to have any chance at all in the game. Their captain Boycottly kept control and it became more and more frustrating as we simply could not get at the tail end to bowl them out.

Adrian and Suraj plugged away however and Adrian eventually was able to knock out their captain for a frustrating 94 with a beautiful away-swinger which was edged to second slip. Why would we have a second slip at that stage of the innings, one may well ask ... But Lo!!, it was the abovementioned classic champagne moment from Chris "Ray Charles" Mair who managed to scoop a catch 1 inch from the ground diving full-length to his right and making up single-handedly for the missing slips cordon ... truly an athletic feat. This was a great relief to all of us not because it might lead to us winning the game, but because it would enable their captain to pick up his grand-daughter, which - it had been made clear to us peasants in the field - was of paramount importance that day.

Well, we might have had them 8 down, but they only needed 6 runs to win and even a few extras would give them that off the last 4 overs. True, they had lost all of their regular batsmen but the task was not that hard. Suraj ... varminating ... claimed his second wicket with a brilliant lbw of their brave young number 10 (he was only 14 - although we were told he was 9 - and had been responsible for two of our illustrious batsmen's demise ... whom I shall not "name and shame") and that left us with 3 overs to get them out for fewer than 3 runs ... AND PIN-UP DJ DID IT!! Hallelujah!! Hallelujah!! We could keep our mobile phone numbers!! Adrian DJ bowled a classic to dismiss their number 9 and we had them all out for 198 with just 2.5 overs to spare ...

Unbelievable.

But true.

CACCC all out 200 (Soper 65, Ali 31)

Wine Trade all out 198 (Gow 3-47, De Jager 3-34)

CACCC win by 2 runs.

