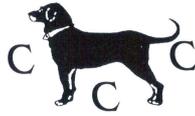


CHILMARK CRICKET CLUB
Affiliated to the Wiltshire Cricket Board



CCC v Mere – Sunday 10th September 2017

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. Actually, it was just the worst of times.

The final game of the season happened on Sunday, despite squalls of rain coming in sideways on gusts of Siberian wind. That the game started at all was remarkable; that it continued was a miracle; that Reg Allen top scored for Chilmark was taking the piss.

Despite the forecast being for a hurricane to descend on Cleeves Farm about an hour into proceedings, the captains from both teams were keen to play, this being the final game of the season. And so it was that, having lost the toss, Chilmark captain for the day Ricky Corbin led his team onto the field, as the horizon in the direction of Hindon disappeared behind a curtain of rain and dislodged barn roofs.

The skipper took full advantage of his position, opening the bowling from the Peter Pettigrew end and was soon putting the ball in a difficult position around off stump. Two runs came from his opening salvo. From the non-Pettigrew end Darren's mate Gareth steamed in and mostly found the pitch, as he conceded just a single from his first burst.

The early going was cautious, but soon Mere's batsmen were finding their feet and the boundary, moving the score to 26 in the fifth over. By now a persistent drizzle had set in, slapping the fielder's faces as it came in sideways on the wind. Captain Ricky Corbin was unsympathetic though, as he thundered to the crease like a Jeep with a dodgy clutch, and unleashed an unplayable off cutter that knocked the off stump out of the ground.

After his four overs had gone for 36 runs, Darren's mate Gareth was given a rest and Frog Lane's eighth best cricketer Ben Fowles was brought into the attack. Bloated with confidence following a game turning spell on the spin friendly track at Fonthill recently, not to mention the publication of his character assassination of a certain humble and innocent Australian teammate in the latest Village Voice, Fowles tossed his first ball to about half track length and watched with dismay as it was dispatched to the mid-wicket fence. This shot was repeated twice more in the over, by which time Captain Corbin had had enough and gave Darren Lee a go.

Corbin continued from the Pettigrew end and soon claimed the second wicket of the innings, an inside edge knocking back the middle stump as Mere fell to 56-2 in the 9th over. It was 77-3 when Corbin struck again, trapping Mere's Dinton ringer and Fowles' new best 'football' friend, Lance,

LBW. Despite his best efforts though, Corbin was unable to get himself on the honour's board, completing his seven over spell with excellent figures of 3-27.

Darren Lee's five overs went for 30 runs, as he finished the season still three wickets short of Dave Clegg's all-time Chilmark record.

But it was Angus Steele who once again made the decisive impact for Chilmark. After his first three overs saw 14 sketchy runs scored, the youngster beat the batsman's defence to rattle his stumps, before claiming the crucial wicket of Mere's opener - who by now was on 67 - caught comfortably (read: no-one thought he'd hang on to it) by Dave Ulliyot at mid-on. Mere were 132 for 5 in the 23rd over, and it was about this time that the drizzle became rain and the players fled for cover.

Tea was taken early and most thought the game would be called off in due course. But blizzard conditions are not enough to dissuade cricket heads on the last day of the season, and so after an hour's delay the players made their way back on to the field to complete Mere's innings (shortened to 30 overs).

Brand King was in the attack by now and had a wicket in his fourth over when the ball - more like a beetroot that's fallen in the loo - slipped from his grip upon delivery and inadvertently bowled the batsman. Mere were 158-6. This became seven down when Angus Steele brilliantly threw the stumps down from mid-off, with Mere's batsman a few inches short of his ground.

Jack Stearman then got in on the action, trapping Mere's number nine in front, before getting a second wicket thanks to a surprisingly sharp catch by Ben Fowles at short cover. So impressed was Frog Lane's ninth best cricketer by his own accomplishment that he replayed his movements in between deliveries for the rest of the innings, less the moment be lost on anyone who wasn't paying attention at the time. He was less inclined to replay his movements a few overs earlier, when a half chance went begging after his top half moved in the direction of the ball, while his bottom half remained anchored. It was like that time in *The Empire Strikes Back* when Luke Skywalker falls an AT-AT Walker using his harpoon cable.

Reg Allen and Jason Stearman completed Mere's innings by drawing their number ten out of the crease and getting a stumping. They had scored 163.

What happened next will be written here for posterities sake, because humility is a fine medicine, however it shan't be spoken about for the rest of time, except in the case of Reg Allen, for reasons that will become obvious in the next paragraph.

The Stearmans, Jason and Jack, opened the batting. Jason, true to form, was bowled for a duck in the second over (5-1). Brand King lasted two deliveries, getting stumped for a duck on the latter (9-2), before Jack popped a catch back to the bowler and was gone for nine (14-3). Reg Allen, remarkably, displayed brief immunity to the carnage, sending the ball over the fine leg fence for six (the first anyone can recall him hitting), on his way to a team high 11 runs, before he was bowled

(23-4). The misery continued unabated thereafter. Dave Ullyot scrambled a couple of singles and a two with idiosyncratic enthusiasm, before he was run out attempting more of the same (30-5). Ben Fowles, blocked and nudged his way to a soggy two, before he lost his stumps (35-6), then Darren's mate Gareth went the same way, having scored one (36-7). Darren Lee was caught at mid-off for the same score (38-8), before Ricky Corbin managed half his season average of two, when he was bowled (39-9). Angus Steele was pretty much the best Chilmark player in attendance on this miserable day, but after holding up an end for 26 deliveries and three runs, he threw caution to the wind and tried to hit out, only to be trapped in front (39-10). This left Pete Corbin as the last man standing - ironic considering the state of his knee and the fact he had been injured (again) for the past three weeks.

So that was Chilmark's innings in a paragraph. No-one wants to consult the record books to see if it is the lowest team total in the club's 15-year history, but no memories present could recall anything worse. Consolation, if there is any, is that the pitch played as good as it has all season. Merial Easton kept spirits buoyed by serving tea with a smile, ably helped by washer-uppers Darren Lee and Pete Corbin. Thankfully there was plenty of cake available due to all the recent rained off games. In fact, there was so much cake that some players over indulged. This probably affected their batting. Yes, it was the cakes.

Let us never speak of this game again.

Mere CC 163 all out (R Corbin 3-27; Jack Stearman 2-10) defeated Chilmark CC 39 all out (R Allen 11; Jack Stearman 9)