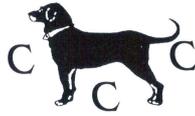


CHILMARK CRICKET CLUB
Affiliated to the Wiltshire Cricket Board



CCC v The Deverills – Sunday 6th August, 2017

After three consecutive washouts cricket was finally back on the menu (not to mention cheese & pickle sandwiches) for Chilmark's finest, and it was well worth the wait.

Ricky Corbin was captain for the day and got things underway positively by winning the toss. He then made the brave decision to send the Deverills in, perhaps feeling he had a bowling heavy line up at his disposal.

Angus Steele opened the attack from the non-Pettigrew end and was immediately into his stride, putting the ball on a good length around off stump at ever increasing speed. His first over was a maiden. New ball partner Reg 'Golden Arm' Allen limped in from the Pettigrew end and provided the contrast to the youthful Steele, generating minimum pace from his painful looking action. It was relatively effective though, with just a boundary and a single coming off his first over.

A couple of loose deliveries and a wide in Steele's second over saw him concede nine runs, however these would be the sum total of runs conceded from his four over spell, as the Deverill's batsmen struggled to cope with his excellent bowling. Allen, too, got in on the maiden bowling action, sending six skimpy deliveries down in his second over. When his fourth went for 14, however, Corbin decided not to push his luck any further.

The Deverills were 33 without loss when Paul Butler took over from Steele. He quickly found his length before getting one to cut back on the batsman; an inside edge hit the stumps and the Deverills had lost their first wicket, the opener gone for a 24-ball duck.

James 'Rocket' Stevenson took over from the Pettigrew end and continued the maiden over infatuation (in total Chilmark would bowl seven for the innings), bowling two on the trot to get his spell under way.

The Deverills best batsman was now at the crease but tight bowling and excellent fielding, particularly from Ricky Corbin and (it pains me to say it) Ben Fowles, kept him in check. Then, on the stroke of drinks, Stevenson struck, trapping the remaining opener in front for 42. The visitors went to the break at 81-2.

Refreshed, thanks to some lovely chilled orange squash, Chilmark set about keeping the run rate in check. Crucial to this was Stevenson, who was bowling a stifling line with wicked pace and bounce. Though he didn't take another wicket, the mere 25 runs he conceded from his seven overs were crucial in the final result.

Meanwhile CCC chairman Carl Jacobs, not playing due to illness, hovered menacingly by the sight screen at the Pettigrew End, sending subliminal instructions to his team, whilst simultaneously providing a visual distraction to the batsman. Never out of the game, is our Chair.

But the day's first seismic event came when Darren Lee got the ball in his hand. Lee started the season needing nine wickets to become just the second Chilmark player (after Dave Clegg, who has 103) to take 100 in his career. It seemed an inevitability, however as each game went by and the wicket column remained empty or frugally filled next to Lee's name, it began to seem like we'd have to wait until next season. He had crawled his way to 97 wickets in fits and bursts, but time and games were running out.

Things seemed to be going the same way on Sunday too, with no wickets to his name mid-way through his fourth over. But then he bowled a horrible, slow full toss on off stump. The batsman's eyes widened, his bat swung through, and he top edged it. The ball looped just wide of the stumps at the bowler's end, where Brand King, fielding at short mid-wicket, charged in to attempt the catch. However Lee also had his eyes on the ball. A collision seemed inevitable until Lee called for it, King ducked out of the way, and Wiltshire's finest greenkeeper had his 98th scalp.

His 99th came in his next over, in almost identical fashion - an unsightly full toss, a complete mishit and Lee taking a simple return catch. There had been some beauties in the 99, but the last two were not amongst them.

When his sixth over went wicketless there was talk of dragging him from the attack just to prolong his pain, however Captain Corbin is a great big ball of empathy, and so gave him one last chance. His first ball went for four, his second for a single. And then it happened. Pitching it on a good length on the off stump, Lee drew a false shot from the batsman. It sailed gently towards mid-off, where a terrified and immediately regretful Corbin waited for it to arrive. Everyone held their breath, including Corbin, whose eyes were wider than the sun. But the ball stuck and Lee had reached the promised land.

The Deverills were 137 for 5 in the 29th over. Any score under 200 felt like something Chilmark could score if they got off to a good start, so the pressure was on the bowlers in the final stages to keep the runs to a minimum. Jake Taylor played the role perfectly, bowling very few loose deliveries as he conceded just 21 runs from his six overs. Along the way he picked up an LBW decision to make things even harder for the Deverills.

Ricky Corbin bowled the last three from the non-Pettigrew end, taking a bit of punishment, especially in the last over (15 runs conceded); however he removed one of the Deverills aggressive batsman in the process, clean bowled by an excellent slower ball.

When all was said and done, all of Chilmark's bowlers and fielders had contributed to an excellent defensive innings, keeping a solid Deverills team to 183-7 off the 35 overs. Chilmark went to the tea break feeling they were well and truly in the game.

It was another hallmark Chilmark village tea too, with sandwiches and cakes from Chilmark's finest women. Reg Allen was so impressed (and confident he wouldn't have to bat) he had three servings.

Captain Ricky Corbin was basking in the giddy, warm glow of his authority and decided to play with the established batting order. As such Ben Fowles was paired with Darren Lee to open the batting, whilst regular opener and form batsman Brand King (average 57.17) was shunted down the order to five. Corbin (average 16.16) put himself in at four. King was okay with this.

The experiment lasted three and a half overs, at which point Lee (proving he can be only a bowler or batsman on any given day, but never both) was clean bowled for six. Fowles remained on zero. Max Allen, full of youthful promise compromised with youngest sibling syndrome, joined Fowles at the crease. He was immediately off the mark with a drive through cover for two, but was then caught in the same region a few balls later without adding to his score. Fowles remained on one. Captain Corbin strutted to the crease, took his guard, swung at the ball, missed, was dismissed LBW for a duck. He claimed he hit the ball. No-one believed him. Fowles, by this time, had accelerated away to six.

Chilmark were in trouble at 17-3 in the sixth over. With King joining his old (in the historical sense) opening partner there seemed, however, a glimmer of hope the home team could get the chase back on track. And when King found an early boundary, followed by Fowles, that hope seemed well invested. However Fowles then spooned a simple catch back to the bowler and was dismissed for ten. Those ten came off 35 deliveries too. It was, in every sense, a slow and confused effort with a fairly anticlimactic end. Mercifully that end came before any irretrievable damage was done to the required run rate.

Paul Butler joined King at the crease, and the pair set about building the chase, knowing there was only one recognised batsman - James Stevenson - remaining in the pavilion, and 148 runs still to get (in 22 overs).

The pair started slowly, taking singles where they could and plucking boundaries where possible. Slowly they chipped away at the total; however as the overs went by, the required run rate continued to climb. At drinks they were still 124 runs short, with the required rate well over seven an over.

King tried to accelerate, but with every over he managed to get a boundary and a few singles, the next would be tight and yield the home team only a couple of runs. After 21 overs, he gave Butler license to hit out, in the hope he might get a few quick runs before allowing Stevenson in to have a crack. But Butler now had his eye in and excelled in the studiously aggressive role, whipping boundaries off his legs behind square, and regularly turning the strike over to King. King fed off this, finding the boundary more often himself, as well as taking advantage of the deep-set field to take singles and two. The pair were working well together, running brilliantly between the wickets and scoring only fractionally underneath the required rate.

Yet still that rate climbed. When Chilmark passed 100 they needed to score at close to eight an over. Shortly after it was over eight. King passed his half century with a six over mid-wicket, but what was really needed was an over full of them. Then came the 28th.

The first three deliveries of the over, delivered by a spinner whose growing terror was hidden by his red sunglasses, disappeared over the mid-wicket fence at ever increasing distances. The fourth was cut through the off side for four. The fifth, once again, sailed over mid-wicket for six, before King took a gentle single to mid-on off the last ball to retain the strike. 29 runs had come from the remarkable over, reducing the required rate down to 3.6 an over, while pushing King to the cusp of a century. It completely changed the complexion of the game.

King brought up his second tonne of the season two overs later with another easy single down to mid-off. By now Chilmark were cruising to victory. There remained, however, one last, slightly unexpected milestone to pass. Paul Butler, who in 53 previous games for Chilmark had never scored more than 26 runs in an innings, was nearing his half century. The problem was they were running out of runs needed to win the game. With Butler on 45 and just six runs required for victory, the Deverill's 'keeper missed a wide ball and conceded four byes. Butler managed a single off the last ball of the over, thus retaining the strike, however with just one needed for the win and the field up, he would have to hit a boundary to reach the milestone.

So on a day when Darren Lee became only the second ever Chilmark player to take 100 wickets, Ben Fowles took half an afternoon to score ten runs and Brand King just six balls to get 29, it was entirely appropriate that Butler should swivel expertly on his heels and dispatch the first ball of the 34th over to the square leg boundary for four, bringing up his first ever half century, and delivering Chilmark an excellent victory in the process.

Chilmark CC 187-4 (B King 106 not out; P Butler 50 not out) defeated Deverills CC 183-7 (D Lee 3-39; J Taylor 1-21)