



## Compton Chamberlayne v CCC – Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2017

Stop the press: Chilmark win a game!

Yes, with June behind us and the real summer underway, Chilmark have got back in to the winner's circle with a comfortable victory over Compton Chamberlayne. It all happened on a sunny afternoon last weekend...

With a few players running late, or having forgotten they were expected to play, it was decided that Compton Chamberlayne would bat first, allowing them time to assemble their team. Chilmark captain for the day Brand King marshalled his troops alongside the pitch and gave a rousing speech that culminated with the news that Reg Allen would be bowling the second over of the day.

The first was bowled by Angus Steele, who quickly worked into a good line coupled with searing pace. An edge to the fine leg boundary was the only scoring shot from the over. Then it was Reg 'Golden Arm' Allen's turn, coming down the hill but with the short boundary behind him ready to tempt any eager batsmen. And sure enough a slog down the ground garnered Compton a boundary, but Allen was on top for the rest of the over, as the early honours were shared.

The green top pitch was producing some tennis ball bounce, especially when Steele pitched the ball short. He managed to get a few to whistle past the chin of Compton's very competent looking opener early, and then on the fourth ball of his second over the batsman tried to glide the ball over the slips, but succeeded only in edging to 'keeper Ollie Clayton. Compton were 9-1 after three overs.

The new batsman was looking to attack, standing a yard out of his crease with an open stance. But for all his intent, Chilmark's new ball pair were up for the challenge. Steele, in particular, was giving nothing away, and although he didn't take another wicket during his five over spell, the mere 19 runs he conceded on the small ground formed the foundation for Chilmark's eventual victory. Allen, meanwhile, went for 35 from his five over allotment, generally bowling well, with just the occasional loose one dispatched to or over the rope.

With ten overs gone and the home team on 54, King called on Jake Taylor to take up the attack. With his first ball he jagged one in to the batsman, who gloved it on to his stumps. Felix Woodroffe then took over from Allen and unleashed one of the quickest spells by a Chilmark player this season. Utilising the bounce of the pitch well, Woodroffe was at times unplayable, the ball whistling past the batsman's chin at speed.

The two youngsters kept a tight rein on Compton's batsmen, with only the occasional loose ball yielding runs. Then, on the third ball of his third over, Woodroffe enticed an edge from Compton's number four bat. What happened next is difficult to explain. In fact, as I write this, I still don't fully believe it happened. I keep expecting to wake and find the world has reverted to normality; but as each subsequent dawn has coloured the sky I'm stuck with the jarring, surreal image of this catch, as real on reflection as it was in the flesh. So I'll just describe it for you now, as honest to the memory as I can, and perhaps in so doing the switch back to normality will be flicked.

The ball, orange because Compton are like that, splintered from the bat at speed. It was one of Woodroffe's fast deliveries, pitched up full at a tempting length. Too tempting, it turns out. By the time the batsman turned around to see where it had gone, the act was nearly complete. It was that fast. And it was low, below knee height. It really should have gone for four, should have raced past the token effort of the slip fielder and rolled over the rope well before fine leg could come around to cut it off. But this presumed fate didn't account for Frog Lane's seventh best cricketer, Ben Fowles, getting in the way.

Stationed at first slip because there was nowhere else to hide him, Fowles, who dropped four catches in one game last season, had already made a meal of an earlier opportunity off of Reg Allen's bowling. There was little faith in him taking this scything chance. Yet with Matrix like reflexes he was already moving to his right, before, it seemed, even the ball had hit the edge of the bat. It's possible he may simply have been falling over, perhaps from sunstroke. There's no way of telling, really, and certainly Fowles denied the suggestion later, sighting his recently acquired tan from a holiday in Devon as proof the piddling Wiltshire sun offered no threat. In any case, he was heading in the right direction, but even still, the ball was low and he needed to get his hand in the right place. Again, it's possible he was just reaching down to break his fall and accidentally found the ball amongst his fingers, but even if that was the case, there was still the difficult task of holding on to it. Yet this he managed too. Moments later his ample frame crashed to the turf, spooking flocks of blackbirds pillaging hedges beyond the mid-off boundary for early season blackberries. The ball though, withstood the shockwaves, and as the seismic events came to a conclusion, it remained in Fowles's right hand, the catcher as stunned as everyone else.

It was clear that this was going to be Chilmark's day. Following the Fowles catch wickets began to fall at regular intervals. Woodroffe struck again in his next over, bowling the surviving opener middle stump. Then Taylor bookended his spell by bowling Compton's number five with his last delivery.

Fowles was brought on to see what other magic he could conjure, and naturally enough struck in his second over, when a very optimistic LBW appeal was upheld by the home team's umpire. By now Compton were 98-6 in the 23<sup>rd</sup> over, and were sending out children to face the Chilmark onslaught. Fowles was taking no prisoners though, getting another LBW decision to go his way in his third over. When he bowled a 12 year old girl with the first ball of his fourth over, what had been a jovial spell became an unsightly display of bullying. King promptly dragged him from the attack.

Jack Stearman had been unlucky to find his dad behind the stumps when a number of stumping opportunities went begging, but he cut out the middle man in his third over when he bowled Compton's number nine. This left just enough time for Guy Woodroffe to bowl a maiden and then Rod Taylor to bowl the last batsman with his second ball. The home team were thus dismissed in the 29<sup>th</sup> over for 116.

The innings break saw the second best tea in Wiltshire put on by the friendly folk of Compton Chamberlayne. Brett Allen - not playing - managed to sneak in and get a plateful of sandwiches. He avoided the cheese and pickle, which seems to be the trend in these parts.

With a small total to chase, Captain King decided to play with the batting order, partnering regular opener Jack Stearman with Jake Taylor. Stearman got things underway by hitting the first ball of the innings to the cover point boundary. Not to be outdone, Taylor followed suit, cracking a boundary off his second ball, as Chilmark raced out of the blocks. However the dominance was short-lived, as Taylor sliced the first ball of the second over to cover and was caught out for five.

As Taylor junior trudged off, Taylor senior jogged on. Rod took two balls to get a feel for the pitch, and then cleared the mid-wicket fence to get off the mark. With Stearman also finding the boundary regularly, Chilmark's total raced along. They were 25-1 in the fifth over when Stearman played a forward defensive shot and the ball struck his pad. Compton's players went up in appeal and were rewarded by support from the umpire. Chilmark had lost one of their best bats, however the youngster was adamant he had edged the ball before it hit his pad. It was in the book though, and when Felix Woodroffe followed him there, bowled for one, Chilmark were suddenly making hard work of what should have been an easy afternoon.

Enter Ben Fowles. With his real time Frog Lane ranking at a season high of five following his heroics with the ball, the situation was primed for Chilmark's second favourite Brummie to capitalise. He got things underway by blocking a slow tubby bowler back down the pitch. It was like-for-like cricket.

Luckily Rod Taylor had the opposite approach, as he cracked seven boundaries and three sixes on his way to a blistering half century. By the time he was caught at first slip he had helped move Chilmark's score to 83. His partnership with Fowles was worth 49. Fowles contributed five of those runs.

Ollie Clayton came in at six and picked up where Taylor left off, before Fowles's tepid stay at the crease came to an end when he was bowled by someone who had only turned up to the ground to borrow the lawnmower.

Chilmark were 90-5 and intent, it seemed, on winning the hard way. Clayton then moved things along by belting a few trademark boundaries behind point, before he was surprisingly bowled by the lawnmower man for 16.

With a handful of runs required for victory and half the innings remaining, Reg Allen was sent in to take the glory. He began by taking a four to the mid-wicket boundary. With him was Guy Woodroffe, who may have been eyeing the honour of hitting the final shot also, as he whipped a four to the square leg fence. However he became the lawnmower man's third victim when he was bowled shortly afterwards.

With just two runs needed to win, Brand King blocked out the rest of the over so that Allen would be on strike for the next. And he didn't disappoint, swatting a boundary behind square leg to register Chilmark's first victory in over a month.

**Chilmark CC 119-7 (R Taylor 53; O Clayton 16) defeated Compton Chamberlayne CC 116 all out (B Fowles 3-16; J Taylor 2-16)**