

CHILMARK CRICKET CLUB
Affiliated to the Wiltshire Cricket Board



Horningsham v Chilmark– Sunday 16th April, 2017

It was cold, blustery and sunless and the outfield would have kept a flock of sheep fed for a month, but none of this stopped Chilmark's finest from taking to the field by Horningsham's village hall on Sunday, and getting the season underway with a resounding victory.

Club chairman and captain for the day Carl Jacobs got things off on the right foot, winning the toss and sending the left-handed pair of Brand King and Jack Stearman in to face the first spell of 2017. It was an inauspicious beginning however, as the first ball sailed well wide of leg stump and evaded the wicketkeeper on its way to the boundary. Runs off the bat soon came though, with King driving through the cover region for two and Stearman taking a single to mid-wicket.

The early going was steady for the opening pair, as they took regular singles and pushed for the odd two. This brought about a few run out opportunities though as the slow outfield ensured the ball didn't escape pursuing fielders as readily as expected. This was exacerbated by the fact that Stearman (age 15 and bursting with youthful exuberance) was feeling somewhat more spritely than King (age 40 and burdened by the harsh reality of age). None-the-less the pair (average age 27.5) pushed on and had the score into the twenties by the seventh over, when Stearman hit the first boundary of the season - a well timed pull shot over square leg.

Runs started to flow a little faster as the batsmen grew in confidence, however there was a brief moment of concern when King, running for a single, was struck in the back of the head by the ball as the fielder attempted to affect a run out. As the players gathered around to check on his welfare, it soon became apparent that King's unfairly maligned man-bun haircut had in fact taken the brunt of the blow, and he would be okay to continue.

Drinks were taken with the score on 79 and both batsmen well set. Captain Jacobs ordained during the interval that Stearman would anchor the innings and King would pursue quick runs or perish trying. Subsequently King cleared the fence over long off twice with a couple of forcefully struck drives, before reaching his half century with a two to mid on. He duly retired having shared a hundred run opening partnership with Stearman.

Chaz Sheppard entered the fray and carved his first ball to the cover boundary. Shortly after came the rare occurrence of an all run three, the shot bringing up Stearman's half century; however the effort took its toll on Sheppard as he subsequently missed a straight one and was out LBW for five.

Cape Town lost a good man over a decade ago, but luckily for Chilmark Rod Taylor and his family now call Chilmark home. Chairman Jacobs had him signed up to play cricket before Rod had even collected the keys, and on Sunday he walked out for CCC as their number four bat. His innings went 4,1,4,4,1,1,6,6,1,1, caught at mid-on. It was a quick-fire knock, the likes of which will make entertaining viewing at Cleeves Farm this summer.

Before Rod departed though Jack Stearman's innings came to an end on 53, caught at mid wicket chasing another boundary. Rod's son Jake then came to the crease, making the Taylor's the 14th father/son combination to turn out for Chilmark Cricket Club. Their time in the middle together was brief though, as Jake edged one through the slips and set off for an easy single. His father, seeing more value in the shot, encouraged him to turn for a second; Jake dutifully, courageously and all too optimistically followed his father's advice and was run out for one.

Tisbury gym Gold Member and Frog Lane's eighth best cricketer Ben Fowles came to the crease next, his off season fitness regime discernible to keen and generous eyes. With the score on 136 and only a handful of overs remaining, hitting out was on the menu. Fowles was stumped for three shortly after.

Ricky Corbin found the weather too chilly and the spectator's too inattentive to break out the infamous Corbin Scoop (trademark registered), however he did look every bit the cricketer (in so much as he was dressed the part) as he hoiked a single to some part of the ground before giving up a catch.

Ben Eastmond, his hair a lush, fertile bouffant, swung at everything sent his way, and managed to connect sufficiently with one to send it over the point fence for six, on his way to a quick fire 8 not out. Along with a cameo by Jason Stearman (5 not out) Chilmark wound their 35 overs up with a very respectable score of 169-6.

A tea of Chilmarkian quality awaited the team in the Horningsham Village Hall, replete with a tempting selection of wine and spirits - left overs from a wedding reception that had still been going when the team arrived earlier in the day. But Chilmark's finest are too professional a bunch of athletes to fall for such a blatant ruse, and made do with warm mugs of PG Tips instead.

Ben Eastmond's bouffant defied the wind as he opened the bowling for Chilmark, the tall paceman causing difficulties for the Horningsham batsmen with some vicious in-swing. Four unconvincing runs came from the over, but that would be as good as it got for the home team for the next twenty minutes, as Brand King (whose locks were made for calmer conditions) bowled early maidens from the Village Hall end.

It was Eastmond who made the first break through, drawing a lofted shot from the opening batsman that carried comfortably to Rod Taylor at mid-on. Two runs from the next three overs saw Chilmark gaining the ascendancy, and when Eastmond tempted an edge from the other opener, and King at first slip took a sharp catch, the home team were in rocky waters at 9-2. Things deteriorated for

them when King got one to dart in to Horningsham's aggressive number four bat, the ball taking a deflection off his pads before knocking back the off stump. The opening spell had been brutal, as Horningsham crumbled to 15-3 after ten overs.

Eastmond was replaced by Jake Taylor and the newcomer immediately showed his credentials, moving the ball nicely in the air, at speed, as Horningsham's batsmen struggled to make a dent on Chilmark's total. King (5-3-6-1) was replaced at the other end by Windmill Will Thompson. The youngster with the enigmatic action struggled to get his radar working in the breezy conditions (ironically), but was still able to land a few dangerous deliveries. He then came close to taking his first wicket for the club, as a lofted drive circled in the windswept air above a frantic Ricky Corbin at mid off, who circled in the opposite direction beneath it. Alas, after aiming his arms in the general direction of the ball for the extent of its flight, Corbin eventually found he was pointing them at its landing spot, a good three metres away from where he was sat on his knees.

Chilmark's second cuddliest player would have his revenge though. Replacing Windmill Thompson (2-0-19-0), Corbin opened with a maiden and troubled the batsman with some excellent pace and movement. In his second over he bowled a bouncer (later revealed to be an accident) that nearly cut the batsman in half, before repeating the dose (this time deliberately) in his third. He then removed Horningsham's best batsman with the ball of the day, a wicked off cutter that took out middle stump.

From the other end Jake Taylor (4-0-11-0) was replaced by Jack Stearman, who immediately made a difference by taking a sharp caught and bowled chance. Horningsham were reeling at 52-5 after 19 overs. It should have been six when Jack induced a lofted drive to cover. Beneath it were the safest hands in the team - those belonging to Chaz Sheppard. Yet somehow the ball didn't stick.

His wasn't the only one. Corbin's brilliant spell (5-1-9-1) could have been even better, were it not for Frog Lane's ninth best cricketer. A mis-hit drive sailed towards mid-wicket, moving slowly, invitingly, yet still somehow managing to out-pace Ben Fowles, who lurched towards it in the manner of a learner driver first coming to grips with the clutch. A crestfallen Fowles admitted at the end of the over that it was his eighth consecutive dropped catch. Nobody doubted him. But would there be a ninth?

The theatrics didn't end there. Replacing Corbin was Rod Taylor (2-0-11-0). Taylor senior's first ball for the club will long be remembered, as it stuck in his palm, bounced at his feet and wound up rolling towards mid off. After that things settled and the game got back on track.

Keen to bring the game to a conclusion while the players could still feel their fingers, Captain Jacobs shrewdly moved a leg slip in to place for Jack Stearman's bowling. The home team's number six bat took the bait soon after, flicking the ball around the corner to Eastmond, who took an excellent catch. It was seven down when Sheppard came on to bowl and made amends for his earlier drop, catching the one that mattered - off his own bowling - to render the home side 110-7 off 30 overs.

Eastmond (6-0-15-2) had one last bowl before Captain Jacobs decided the game was safe enough to allow Fowles an over. He conceded seven runs and was removed from the attack. His influence on the game didn't end there, however. During Sheppard's next over, the second last of the game, the clouds parted and a small miracle unfolded: Horningsham's number eight lofted the ball towards Fowles. He had to take but half a stride forward to get into position. There seemed plenty of time. Everyone held their breath. And then: it stuck. Fowles clung to the ball like it was food, as his teammates rushed in to celebrate in polite and measured fashion. Frog Lane's seventh best cricketer had redeemed himself.

Seeing the sun shining from such an unusual place, Captain Jacobs decided to bring himself on to bowl to see if he could cash in. And sure enough, he had a wicket with his first ball, enticing a drive that wound up in Jake Taylor's hands and mid on. Five deliveries later Jacobs ended the innings by sending a deadly in-swinging ball into middle stump. A sentence I never expected to write. The game was won and the season was underway in fine fashion.

Chilmark 169-6 (Jack Stearman 53, B King 50 not out) defeated Horningsham (C Jacobs 2-6, C Sheppard 2-12)