

CHILMARK CRICKET CLUB
Affiliated to the Wiltshire Cricket Board



CCC v Sports Shed – Sunday 25th June, 2017

June has been talked of as the month Chilmark Cricket Club would rather forget, but to do so would be to erase from the memory some fantastic and extremely close games. Last week's affair against Douglas Jardine came down to the last over; and the same happened again on Sunday against Sports Shed, as 18 sixes and 55 boundaries contributed to a combined total of over 500 runs, with the result hanging in the balance until the second last delivery.

Recently a father for the second time Ricky Corbin was given the captain's armband for the day. Ricky doesn't do anything cricket related in a conventional style (which anyone who has witnessed his batting can attest too) and it was no different when it came to the coin toss. The coin wedged in the pitch on its thin edge, leaning ever so slightly towards the visiting team's call. It was thus deemed they had won the toss; their captain chose to bat first.

Pete Corbin got things underway from the Peter Pettigrew end, building up a good head of steam as he tested the technique of Sports Shed's opening batsmen. A single came from his first over. Coming up the hill was Jake Taylor, who was new to the club this season, but has quickly made himself an integral part of the squad. His opening over was a tightly bowled maiden.

Despite the good start, it didn't take long for the young Sports Shed batsmen to start attacking. Boundaries came from both Corbin and Taylor's next overs, before the new ball pair got back on top with some more tight bowling. It was a good contest. After eight overs Sports Shed were 27-0.

Paul Butler came on as a first change bowler, replacing Corbin, and found himself under immediate attack, as his first delivery was whipped to the long off boundary. He came back well though, conceding just one more run for the over; then in his next he was hit over square leg for six, as Sports Shed looked to increase their scoring rate. However, with the score on 61 Butler struck, when the left-handed opener pulled a short-pitched ball directly at Brand King at square leg, who didn't so much catch it as stop it from taking out his throat.

Taylor (0-17) was replaced by Will Hodgson, who along with his father Jon was playing his first game for the season. Despite some excellent pace and a tight line, the younger Hodgson was unable to take the wicket his efforts deserved, finishing with figures of 0-16 after his three over spell.

It was the introduction of Darren Lee that really put Chilmark in the game. Replacing Butler (1-22), Lee rolled down the hill from the Pettigrew end and put the ball in difficult spots for the batsmen. After leaking ten runs from his first two and a half overs, Lee then struck, enticing a mistimed drive from the remaining opening batsman. The ball sailed towards Jon Hodgson at deep mid-on, who backtracked and accounted for the gusty breeze perfectly, taking a comfortable catch to render Sports Shed 2-90 after 20 overs.

Lee wasn't finished there though, as he finally mounted his long-touted assault on Dave Clegg's position at the top of Chilmark's all-time leading wicket taker's list (ten wickets shy before this game). In his fourth over he snuck one through the batsman's defense and knocked back middle stump, before taking a third wicket in his next over, this time caught by Will Hodgson at deep fine leg. Chilmark were gaining the ascendancy, as the overs ticked by and the wickets fell. And when Reg Allen replaced Jon Hodgson (0-17) and found some of his old golden arm magic to deceive his way past bat and pad and on to stumps, things were really looking up. But all that was about to change.

A stoutly fellow came in at six for Sports Shed, with his team 150-5 after 25 overs. He blocked his first ball before launching an attack on everything that was sent his way. No-one was immune. Lee had figures of 3-16 after five overs and there was serious talk of him taking two more wickets to get his name on the honours board. But after his sixth over went for 21 runs it was decided the honours board could wait.

Reg Allen's spell was cut at three overs when his figures had blown out to 1-27, while Brand King managed to remove the slightly less attacking batsman, well caught by Jon Hodgson again at deep mid-on, in amongst conceding 23 runs in two overs.

Pete Corbin was reintroduced to try and fight fire with fire, yet his two over burst cost 24 runs, blowing his figures out to 0-39. But in Pete's case being hit to or over the boundary seven times in 12 deliveries was not the most humiliating thing that would happen to him on this day. No, that would happen a few overs later when he chased a ball destined for the boundary with relentless commitment (he asked me to say that). The chase was in vain, however Pete's momentum meant he needed the fence to bring him to a stop. An immovable object versus an unstoppable force? Hardly. The old fences at Cleaves Farm have seen better days and so Chilmark's Club Secretary was a passenger in a timber wreck, as fence posts and limbs exploded into space at all angles, and everyone present, who was lucky enough to bear witness, was given a memory they'll not soon forget.

He wasn't alone contending for fielding hilarity of the day though. Carl Jacobs made a solid contribution when he scrambled after a ball hit close in, with the batsmen running a tight single. He attempted to pick up the ball and underarm it over the stumps in one smooth motion, but succeeded instead in tripping over his feet and flying face first into the grass, with the ball rolling to an oblivious halt behind him.

In the dying overs the sixes and boundaries kept coming. Captain Ricky Corbin brought himself on and went for nine runs off his first six deliveries. Then there was some controversy as the umpires had conflicting counts, with one believing there was still another ball to be delivered to complete the over. The scorers were otherwise distracted by sights unrelated to cricket so couldn't confirm how many balls had been bowled. A debate raged, until Ricky agreed to deliver one more ball and move the game along. He didn't waste it, taking a return catch to drop Sports Shed to 7-243.

Carl Jacobs came on for the last two overs at the Pettigrew end, conceding just seven runs in the first and 14 in the second, also the last over of the innings. By then Sports Shed had racked up 264 runs, so stumping their portly batsman off the last ball seemed like something of an anti-climax.

Tea was served to the usual chorus of approving groans from visiting players. Being a team of young lads, it seems fair to say that this would be the best meal many of them had had during the weekend. Claire Allen and Morag Philpott made irresistible sandwiches, while Carl Jacobs made cheese and pickle. Cakes and sweets were provided by Claire, Bev Small, Merial Eaton, Selaine Saxby and Lisbeth Diaper. There was nothing left by the end of the day.

The chase began in earnest with Brand King and Ricky Corbin opening the batting. Four balls later Max Allen joined King in the middle, after Corbin provided some catching practice for the square leg fielder off his first ball. Three balls later Jon Hodgson joined King in the middle, after Allen and King negotiated the merits of taking a risky single with a series of yes, no, maybe calls, that concluded with a decision to send Allen back to the non-strikers end a little too late to beat the direct hit from mid-wicket.

It wasn't the best of starts. Hodgson, though, was keen to show the year off between games had gathered upon his batting no rust. He hit his second ball to the cover boundary and Chilmark had more runs on the board than wickets lost.

Much was now to depend on the two batsmen at the crease for the home team. The target was a long way off - possibly too far - but a more achievable ambition of making a game of it was in their hands. Playing his natural game, Hodgson was finding the boundary with some consistency, while King, always an anxious starter, scrambled singles and tried not to run his senior partner out. They brought up the team 50 in the 12th over as the required run rate started to blow out towards double figures. King had a life on 20 when a thick edge flew to point but was put down, while Hodgson had his own struggles, swapping first his helmet, then his bat, as he battled to feel comfortable at the crease. Then, with his score on 37, he was bowled by a horribly slow delivery that crawled around his pad.

A win looked further away than ever for Chilmark, even as Will Hodgson replaced his dad and showed how close to the tree the seed has fallen, as he drove a couple of sweetly timed boundaries down the ground.

Drinks were taken with the home side still 150 from victory, and when Will was given out LBW just afterwards, the cause felt truly lost. It was about then that King decided he'd spent long enough getting his eye in and started to attack the bowling. Boundaries started to flow and the first of his eight sixes was sent over the long on boundary. He brought up his half century with another maximum, this one over mid-off.

Reg Allen joined him in the middle, whipped a boundary through mid-wicket, then was bowled, making way for Carl Jacobs, who had an almost identical impact. Meanwhile King continued to plunder runs wherever possible.

If there was a point when the ludicrous possibility of victory appeared on the radar for Chilmark, it was shortly after Darren Lee arrived in the middle. His advice to King was that they should just concentrate on getting the opener to his century, which at the time he was about 30 runs shy of. But then Lee hit four boundaries in an over, a couple of runs more than the required rate at the time. The following over Chilmark managed a similar cache, with King clearing the fence and Lee finding it. The pair didn't openly say it, but the thought occurred that they might be able to haul the target in, even though there were only three overs remaining and still 45 runs required. When Lee added a few more boundaries, all crisply dispatched straight down the ground, and then sent one over the fence, the chase was definitely on.

With King on 82 a very helpful Carl Jacobs called out from the pavilion to let him know how close to his century he was. King responded by hitting his next ball for six. '88' Jacobs called out. Two balls later another six. '94'. Suddenly the century was one hit away. The crowd held their breath. Then King, renowned for milking a situation, took a single to deep cover. Lee took aim at the next ball and for the first time in his blistering innings didn't get it out of the middle of the bat. The catch was taken at mid-off and Lee's swashbuckling knock ended with his score on 35.

As the pair had crossed, King was on strike for the final ball of the over. He stepped down the pitch, caught it on the full and sent it over the mid-off fence to register his second century for Chilmark.

The new batsman was Jake Taylor. King's advice was that he shouldn't try and hit over the top as he wouldn't have the strength in his adolescent bones to clear the field. Taylor nodded dutifully and then hit a six into the lawnmower shed. Kids these days.

With a few more boundaries and some quick running, it all came down to the last over. 18 runs were required, with King on strike. The first ball he cracked back past the bowler and into the fence at the Pettigrew end. 14 required off five balls. With the field set well back, the pair knew that shots that might usually yield just a single, could return two runs, if their legs were quick enough. So on the next ball King pushed one towards deep midwicket and set off. They turned for the second as the ball was collected and thrown to the 'keeper's end. But it was off target and sailed past. Suddenly an overthrow was available and without thinking they took it. This left Taylor on strike with four balls remaining and 11 required. It would have been an appropriate time to hit another six, but the bowler was equal to the task and sent a quick delivery past Taylor's bat. Dot ball. Taylor managed a

single to cover off the next delivery, leaving King on strike with ten required off two balls. Only four overs ago this situation seemed unthinkable, but now the victory was just two lusty blows away.

The field spread and King inched forward. The ball came in full and fast and a little wide. He swung hard - but missed, and in that instant the carrot was yanked away, the game lost. The final ball was incidental.

So, a game that looked lost for three quarters of the day, suddenly burst to life, thanks to an ebullient innings from the underrated Darren Lee, and a scorching century from Brand King. Chilmark will win again soon, but few victories will be as entertaining as this loss.

Sports Shed CC 264-8 (D Lee 3-37; R Corbin 1-9) defeated Chilmark CC 255-7 (B King 113*; J Hodgson 37).