

CHILMARK CRICKET CLUB
Affiliated to the Wiltshire Cricket Board



Kilmington Stourton v Chilmark – Saturday 22nd April, 2017

581 runs and a result that hung in the balance until the final over of the match, was the sum of a fabulous day's cricket in the grounds of Stourhead House, as Chilmark made it two wins from two games to start the season.

With the clouds parting to herald a gloriously sunny day, captain Ben Fowles won the toss and elected to bat on what looked like a good wicket for run scoring. After some deliberation it was decided that the successful pairing from the previous game of Brand King and Jack Stearman would open the batting. It was an inspired move.

After taking a few overs to get used to the pace of the wicket, the two left handers started opening their shoulders. Four boundaries came from the fourth over as the two batsmen made the most of a lightning fast outfield, whilst single aplenty were available - and taken - due to the deep set fielders. The running though would take a toll on King, who injured his left quadricep early on, making running between wickets difficult. The injury didn't stop the flow of runs though, as both he and Stearman flayed the ball to all parts of the ground in their early onslaught.

Both players reached their thirties in quick time, as Chilmark's total cruised past 50 inside seven overs. It was at this point the Stearman accelerated away from his crippled senior partner, racing to his half century in a blitzkrieg of boundaries. In amongst it occurred an extraordinary sequence, where he hit each legal delivery of the over to the boundary. Making the feat even more remarkable was that the over began with one bowler and was finished by another, as the first (after being hit for three boundaries and bowling two wides) claimed he had developed a shoulder injury. The over was completed by a much younger and faster bowler, but Stearman was merciless, treating each of his deliveries in the same manner as he had the previous. To help celebrate the event Darren Lee, on as a substitute fielder for the short-staffed opposition, then dropped Stearman at square leg.

Chilmark's total climbed past 100 with just 12 of the allotted 40 overs bowled, as a big scored beckoned. King then brought up his half century with a six over mid-wicket, and decided that scoring in such increments was a much more desirable way of going about things. He launched three consecutive maximums from one unfortunate spinner, the largest of which nearly ended up in the clubhouse. The fireworks ended with his score on 77 though, as his eyes lit up on seeing another juicy slow delivery, only to miss it and lose his stumps. The opening partnership had been a healthy one for Chilmark, as they sat pretty at 182-1 after 19 overs.

Reg Allen came in at first drop and provided a striking contrast in technique to Stearman. He managed a couple of idiosyncratic swipes to the on side for singles, before being bowled. This brought Frog Lane's seventh best cricketer to the crease. Ben Fowles needed a score to reflect his hard, out of season work in the gym, however this wasn't to be the day as he lost his stumps after making just three. Club Chairman Carl Jacobs then strode confidently to the crease, only to return one ball later after controversially being given out LBW by Chilmark's Ricky Corbin. Jacobs claimed to have gotten an edge on the ball, but he accepted the decision gracefully and had nothing but kind words to say of Corbin when he returned to the sideline.

With this collapse Chilmark's bright start had faded somewhat, sliding to 207-4. It then became the same score for five down when Brett Allen was adjudicated as run out for a duck, with Corbin again the unfortunate umpire called upon to send his team mate packing. To make matters worse, the single, if successful, would have brought up Jack Stearman's century. Corbin's reign of umpiring terror didn't end there though; shortly after the run-out decision he adjudicated that a full toss to Stearman that evaded the wicketkeeper was a bye, signaling it straight away. The score went in the book and the over was completed. At the change Corbin jogged to the scorers and informed them the previous delivery had actually struck Stearman's glove, meaning the bye should actually go against his score. Unfortunately, this meant that technically he had brought up his century with the gloved shot, only his teammates weren't able to celebrate the milestone with him. It was decided that the bye should stand, and Stearman should remain on 99. If he got out, Corbin would take the fall.

Luckily for all involved Jack stroked a comfortable single to mid-on shortly after and in so doing registered his first century for the club. At fifteen it also makes him the youngest ever centurion for Chilmark. A sure bet is that it won't be his last. To make the occasion all the more sweeter, his father Jason was batting with him when he reached the milestone.

With the Stearman's at the crease the runs started to flow again. Jason hit three quick boundaries in a brief innings worth 15, before he was bowled. Max Allen then joined Jack, and the two youngsters piled on the misery for the home team. They took Chilmark's total beyond 250 before Max was run out for 19. Gus Steele was unfortunate to get a gem of a delivery first up, losing his stumps without scoring, before Darren Lee joined Stearman for the final few overs. The pair ran and swung at everything, with Lee particularly effective in scoring two boundaries from the four balls he faced. When the dust settled, Chilmark had scored their highest total in years: 294-8.

Jack Stearman was applauded from the ground by both teams. His undefeated score of 137 is the second highest innings ever by a Chilmark batsman - you have to go all the way back to Chaz Sheppard's 150 in the first ever game in 2002 to find a higher one.

After a terrific tea featuring a fine selection of sandwiches and cakes, a confident and well fed Chilmark outfit trotted onto the ground to defend their total. Gus Steele was given the ball by Captain Fowles and started with a peach of a delivery that drew the edge from Kilmington's opener.

Unfortunately for Steele and Chilmark the ball snuck between 'keeper Jason Stearman and Brand King at first slip and went to the boundary for four.

Darren Lee trundled in from the other end and begun his spell in miserly fashion, conceding just a single from his first over. Then Steele was back and once again found the edge of the bat, this one carrying low and fast to King's left, who managed to get a half a hand to it but couldn't hold the chance. When another sharp opportunity went begging behind the stumps in Lee's next over, Chilmark found themselves allowing their hosts into the game.

They took full advantage too. Despite Steele's tight bowling, the required run rate of more than seven an over meant the batsmen were going to attack early, and the youngster found himself on the receiving end of some big hits. He kept at his task well though and if it wasn't for some rusty catching by his teammates would have registered even better figure than the five overs for 38 that he did. Lee, meanwhile, benefitted from his lack of pace, which forced the batsmen to force the issue. His five over opening spell went for a tidy 23 runs.

At 63 without loss after ten overs Kilmington had formed a solid base on which to launch their attack on Chilmark's total. For the team that call Cleeves Farm home, a wicket was urgently needed. After surveying his arsenal of bowlers, Captain Fowles plumped for Brett Allen and Ricky Corbin to take up the task.

Early signs were not promising, as both bowlers were carted to the boundary; however with the home team's stronger opener looking particularly menacing, Corbin suddenly came to the rescue. After setting his victim up with a series of half-track pies and wides that barely made the pitch, Corbin sent down another seemingly unthreatening delivery, this time towards leg stump. The batsman flicked at it, and maybe he edged it or maybe he didn't. But it sounded like an edge and the umpire agreed. The hosts were 88-1. The following over it was Brett Allen's turn, as he finally got one through the defence of Kilmington's determined opener. Suddenly the game was back in Chilmark's favour.

But it wasn't going to be that easy. The home team's middle order batsmen were very capable and on the batsman friendly wicket, runs were still very much on the menu. Brett Allen's first spell went at seven runs an over, while Corbin's cost marginally more. Replacing that pair was Max Allen and Jack Stearman, yet runs continued to flow. After 20 overs the hosts were cruising at 141-2, only slightly behind the required rate, yet with plenty of wickets in hand to make a late charge. Chilmark needed a wicket.

Captain Fowles turned to Brand King to see if he could make the breakthrough, but the limping Australian with the man bun hairdo proved ineffective, leaking 23 runs from three overs before being pulled from the attack. After 25 overs Kilmington had moved their score to 174, with both batsmen finding regular boundaries. A chance then went begging when Darren Lee put down a catch at square leg, mirroring the opportunity he spurned when sub-fielding for the home team earlier in

the day. Chilmark heads dropped, as the home team found themselves just 60 runs shy of victory with eight overs remaining.

It's in times like these that a team's captain earns his stripes and for Chilmark those stripes were on the burly shoulders of Frog Lane's seventh best cricketer, but its finest skipper: Ben Fowles. Rather than bring last season's leading wicket taker King on to bowl, opt for his own plucky leg spin, or take a punt on the unpredictable brilliance of Carl Jacobs, Fowles instead turned to his trusted opening bowler, Darren Lee. It was a risky move. Lee's bowling can look very juicy to hungry batsmen, but it is this appetite that Lee expertly manipulates, as he tempts them into extravagant shots, then undoes them with his baffling lack of pace. In a hot/cold tactic, Fowles went for the express pace of Brett Allen from the other end. Again there was a risk, as edges from Allen's bowling tend to race to the boundary, rather than to hand. Fowles set his field and put his trust in his men.

Lee started well, conceding just one run from his first four deliveries, before a boundary down the ground, followed by a two, gave Kilmington most of the runs they needed in the over. But the pressure remained. Then it was Allen's turn, and the tall lad with the strange shoes did his captain proud, leaking just two runs from the over; before Lee made the vital blow, bowling the home team's best batsman for 91. Suddenly Chilmark had a sniff. Things turned even more in the visitor's favour when Allen removed the new batsman's stumps for a duck in his next over. Kilmington were now 251-4 after 36 overs.

With 44 required off the last four overs, the home side had to start swinging. But now Chilmark could taste victory. Suddenly the fielders scampered to stop boundaries, with Jacobs in particular making some excellent saves in the outfield (although he undid some of this work by kicking one ball over the boundary just as he appeared to have it under control). Gus Steele, Fowles and Lee all made crucial saves in the last few overs, making the chase ever more difficult for the home team.

But the drama wasn't over. A loose ball down the leg side from Allen went for six, as 11 runs came off the 38th over. With Lee bowled out Captain Fowles turned to Ricky Corbin to deliver the penultimate over. The enigma wrapped in a luxurious riddle put everything in to each ball, but two boundaries and 14 runs in total meant the home team required 18 off the last over to win.

Fowles set his field, putting men on the fence everywhere that the limits of good sportsmanship would endure. Even 'keeper Jason Stearman positioned himself half way to the fence (helmet still on). The tension was high, but the calmest man on the field was Brett Allen, who simply asked for the ball and took care of business.

But not without a last kick in the tail. Two runs from each of the first two deliveries brought the required total into sight, before a boundary to square leg meant the home team required just ten off the final three balls. Suddenly the boundaries looked short and scarcely manned. Allen, however, took the pressure in his stride. An inside edge squirted to the onside and resulted in only a single, before his penultimate delivery beat bat, pad and wickets and was collected by Stearman behind the

stumps. With no run scored, the game was over. Another dot from the final ball delivered Chilmark a six-wicket victory, with Kilmington falling seven runs short. A cracking game.

Chilmark CC 294-8 (Jack Stearman 137 not out; B King 77) defeated Kilmington & Stourton 287-4 (D Lee 1-34; B Allen 1-53)