

CHILMARK CRICKET CLUB
Affiliated to the Wiltshire Cricket Board



CCC v London Erratics – Sunday 23rd July, 2017

Things weren't looking promising when day broke over Chilmark on Sunday - grey clouds loomed on the horizon and the forecast was for heavy rain to descend on Cleeves Farm around midday. The prospect of cricket occurring seemed slim. But Mother Nature didn't count on CCC chairman Carl Jacobs consulting his personal meteorologist/witch doctor (not available on the NHS). After an R rated dance in the bird bath of his back garden, Jacobs donned his whites and started warming up his bowling shoulder. The game would go ahead.

Sure enough the clouds dissipated, a rainbow arced from Park Drive down to Cleeves Farm and the players gathered for the battle. First to arrive was Ben Fowles, keen to make sure he had everything in place for the tea team. He put the milk in the fridge, filled the water butt and polished all the crockery. Then he ironed the aprons and tea towels, removed a 'mystery cake' from the freezer and tried to taste the orange squash until he had the perfect mix for the drinks break. He was about to etch his name onto the honours board when he heard a tapping on the kitchen window, turned and saw Patrick 'The Doc' Craig-McFeely shaking his head in schoolmasterly fashion.

Darren Lee arrived next, did his customary jogging lap of the oval, spearing the flags into the white line on the way, before hurdling the fence and bareback riding Mr Pelham's white horse to the Black Dog for a shandy. There he found Charlie Morgan asleep in the fireplace where he'd been since the previous night. Lee downed his pint and flung Morgan on the back of the horse; the two of them galloped gloriously over fences and across fields, through St Margaret's and along The Street, finally arriving at Cleaves Farm where The Doc had a concoction (known as a Hindon Heinrich) ready to go. Fowles lifted Morgan from the horse, stuck two fingers up his nostrils and opened his throat for The Doc to pour the concoction down (exact recipe a closely guarded secret, but it had more than a dash of Chinese Chardonnay).

The balance of the team soon gathered and before long The Doc was tossing the coin in the middle with the opposition captain. The opposition were known as the London Erratics. So erratic were they that they had been three players short the day before the game. However Jacobs had sent out the word and a few of Chilmark's finest had agreed to step up and play for the opposing team: Windmill Will Thompson, Chaz Sheppard and Ricky Corbin. Sheppard was yet to arrive but Jacobs assured the Erratics captain he would and it would be worth the wait.

The Erratics won the toss and elected to bat. Going on the advice of Jacobs, the Erratics put Windmill Will Thompson in to open. For Chilmark Reg 'Golden Arm' Allen opened the bowling. It was a clash

of titans and Thompson came out on top in the first over, sending Allen over the rope on three occasions as the Erratics got off to a flyer.

From the Pettigrew end Jake Taylor was given the ball, but he too caught the brunt of Whirlwind Thompson, going for 15 runs in the over. This pattern continued for the next eight overs, as no matter what changes The Doc made to the bowling attack, Thompson simply carted them all over the park. The youngster brought up his half century with a reverse sweep for six off of Felix Woodroffe. At the other end his partner was content to play the sheet anchor role and remained unbeaten on three.

The first breakthrough for Chilmark came in the 12th over, as a Reg Allen bouncer caught the glove of the Erratics opener and Ollie Clayton took a one-handed catch above his head, whilst jumping at least three feet off the ground. A pigeon flew beneath him while airborne.

Allen was on a hat-trick one ball later as he snuck a vicious in swinging yorker through the Erratics number three, however as it was the last ball of the over he would have to wait. And wait. The Doc was in no mood for milestones and removed Allen from the attack.

Drinks were taken with the Erratics sitting comfortably at 93-2. Will Thompson was undefeated on 81. After the break The Doc applied the Brummy Blitz, with Carl Jacobs operating from the Pettigrew end and Ben Fowles from the other. It half worked. Jacobs was expensive, with Thompson in particular going after him with a series of deft glides off his hip and some vicious drives down the ground. A century beckoned for the youngster. At the other end, however, Fowles was in the zone as he sent down maiden after maiden to completely tie up the batsmen.

With his score on 99 Thompson tapped down a few stray strands of grass on the pitch and took guard to Jacobs. He was a picture of confidence. The field was up, tempting the youngster to go over the top to bring up his century. Jacobs stood at his mark and looked to the sky, his eyes shut. His lips moved, seeming to utter something unintelligible, and then, just as he began his run in, a cloud passed in front of the sun. To the naked eye there was nothing unusual about what happened next. But to Jacobs a rainbow emerged, swooping down onto the field, to the bowler's end, where it caught the ball as it left his hand. It carried the ball towards Thompson, who strode forward with his left leg, bent on his right knee and began to swing at the ball. But the rainbow curled inwards, then away, then in again. Thompson was bamboozled, he swung past the ball, so hard in fact that he let go of the bat. The ball slid between his legs and took out middle stump.

As Thompson walked off and Chilmark players celebrated, the bat he had lost control of continued up into the sky until it could no longer be seen.

Play continued. Ricky Corbin came in next for the Erratics, wearing no protective gear whatsoever. It was a gutsy, provocative move by Corbin, especially considering the pace with which Jacobs and Fowles were bowling. But it paid off, as he played some delightful scoop shots behind square on the offside (all from Jacobs) and rattled the visitor's score along.

By his seventh over Fowles was on the verge of history. In fact he had probably already made it, but if he could get through the last over of his spell without conceding a run he would be the first in Chilmark, if not anywhere, to bowl seven consecutive maiden overs. Corbin was on strike, having bashed Jacobs out of the attack and then taken to Brand King, who couldn't get his length right while his hair refused to stay in its man bun.

The first three balls were perfect from Fowles - just short of a length and not spinning at all. The fourth also didn't spin, but it was pitched on a line that Corbin found difficult to scoop away. Another dot ball. When the fifth ball didn't spin (no ball so far in his spell had spun) but still tied Corbin up, Fowles was just one delivery away from history. The Doc brought the field up; Jacobs offered Fowles the use of his rainbow, an offer which bemused Fowles; Corbin tapped nervously at the pitch. Frog Lane's fifth best cricketer ambled in, skipped the last couple of strides and then...was called for a no ball by umpire Bryan Cross. Forced to re-bowl the delivery Fowles ripped his fingers across the ball. It pitched a yard outside leg stump, spun viciously across Corbin, who scooped it in idiosyncratic fashion over the third man fence for six.

Ricky Corbin's innings eventually ended on 49 when he was run out in bizarre circumstances - Rod Taylor and son Jake were arguing in the mid-wicket region about who had bowled better, when Corbin cracked a shot in their direction. Assuming they were too busy debating the merits of each other's spells, Corbin set off for the run, only for Rod to stick out his foot, flick the ball to Jake, who took it on his chest, down on to his knee, back to Rod, who threw the stumps down at the non-striker's end.

There was a burst of wickets following Corbin's demise as Charlie Morgan produced a spell of unlikely pace and guile to bag himself three scalps. One brought Ben Fowles back into the game, when a thick edge looked to be sailing well over the gully region for four, only for Fowles to sprint back from first slip and take a diving catch just inside the boundary. Frog Lane's fourth best cricketer celebrated by jumping on top of the fence and then slam dunking the cricket ball in the wind sock. It was given out, however 12 runs were added to the Erratics score as per the local playing regulations that say any ball that goes into the windsock is considered a double six.

With nine overs remaining The Doc brought Felix Woodroffe and Jake Taylor back on to try and end the innings early. However the Erratics threw a curve ball by sending out a 15-year-old girl to bat. The two youngsters seemed unsure how to handle this turn of events and proceeded to bowl gentle half trackers. Consequently 97 runs came off the next eight overs, yet neither Woodroffe or Taylor seemed the slightest bit concerned.

The final over began with the Erratics on 312-8. Everyone assumed The Doc would bring Reg Allen back on, being that he was still on a hat-trick, however he gave himself a bowl instead. After the 15-year-old girl hit his first four deliveries over long on for six, bringing her century up in the process, The Doc decided enough was enough and, off his long run up, bowled a short delivery that would have taken her chin off, had she not got a glove in the way. The ball lobbed up on the on side where

Jake Taylor and Felix Woodroffe converged to decide who was going to let it hit the ground. Thankfully Ben Fowles barreled through the pair and took the catch between the pinched cleavage of his chest, giving the batsman an unceremonious send off afterwards that centered around how lucky she was he had bowled his allotment by the time she came out to bat. Frog Lane's third best cricketer was pumped.

Chaz Sheppard arrived just in time to pad up and come out to face the last ball of the innings, which he blocked back down the pitch. The Erratics innings thus came to an end having scored an impressive 336-9. It was going to take an almighty chase by Chilmark.

The tea break went well, although a scare went through those gathered when a health inspector turned up to test the food and found Carl Jacobs's cheese and pickle sandwiches contained mad cow disease. Luckily nobody had eaten any.

Chilmark's chase got under way in the worst possible way, when opener Brand King was timed out. The Australian was still in the change rooms trying to get his hair right when the appeal went up in the middle; umpire Bryan Cross had no hesitation in raising his finger (though there was some debate as to whether he was simply pointing out a cloud that looked like Margaret Thatcher riding a unicorn).

Darren Lee galloped to the crease to join Ollie Clayton and proceeded to smash everything that came his way down the ground. After five overs there were seven fielders covering the region between long off and long on, yet the dashing batsman still managed to find the gaps as he raced to his half century. Clayton, meanwhile, defended astutely and remained unbeaten on two.

The Erratics needed a breakthrough, and they got it when Ricky Corbin came on to bowl, tripped on his laces in the delivery stride and accidentally bowled a yorker that took out Lee's middle stump. When he did the same thing three balls later, this time taking out Jake Taylor's stumps, the Erratics decided to situate a fielder right next to the bowling crease to kick out Corbin's foot as he bowled. It worked wonders, as he took two more wickets, those of Felix Woodroffe and Reg Allen (though the latter of those probably would have been out regardless) before his ankle snapped and he was taken to Salisbury A&E on the back of Darren Lee's horse.

Things were looking grim for Chilmark, but with Clayton (8 not out) and now Patrick Craig McFeely at the crease, there was still hope for the locals. It was The Doc who attacked first, dancing down the pitch to Windmill Will Thompson and launching him back over his head for a succession of sixes. The run rate started to climb, but it was still an uphill battle for the home team. At drinks Chilmark were 92-4.

After the break The Doc continued to set the pace, while Clayton minded the other end. He reached his half century with a square cut six that was brilliantly caught by Sheila Fowler as she emerged from the ladies. When he tried to repeat the shot next ball he succeeded in only chopping it down on to his boot, where after it bounced up into the grill of his helmet, then off his shoulder and onto

the back of his bat. The ball went to the boundary for four however Ricky Corbin, fielding in the slips, appealed for a double hit and umpire Bryan Cross again pointed towards the clouds.

With The Doc gone and Charlie Morgan in, the situation was primed for Ollie Clayton to take control. However he blocked out the next over and suggested Morgan swing the bat. Morgan did as suggested, but barely middled anything. Edges flew every which way but none went to hand. In this manner he scraped his way to 34 before taking a wild swing and completely missing the ball. At slip Ricky Corbin appealed anyway, and once again umpire Bryan Cross sent Morgan packing.

Rod Taylor didn't even ask Clayton whether he should be the aggressor, teeing off from his very first ball. He raced to 30 through a series of hooks over mid-wicket, before the Erratics wised up to the tactic required to slow his scoring. They started to bowl wide of the off stump and try as he might, Taylor was unable to play his favourite shot. It was at the end of an over that Clayton suggested Taylor try batting left handed. Taylor thought it worth trying and soon was cracking his way beyond the half century mark. His innings came to an end on 67 when coverage of a rugby game was due to begin on Sky and he walked off the pitch.

Chilmark were in dire straits at 228-8 with five overs remaining, still 85 short of the target. Ollie Clayton was on 10. Ben Fowles entered the fray with strict instructions from The Doc to hit sixes and try and get Clayton out. Frog Lane's second-best cricketer tried his best, calling Clayton through on suicidal singles, however he kept picking out Chaz Sheppard in the field when doing this and the burly Chilmarkian deliberately threw high over the stumps and wicketkeeper, gaining the home team four overthrows in the process. Soon Fowles wised up to the ruse and instead of using it to run out Clayton, utilised it as a method for scoring easy runs. However it would be his downfall, as Sheppard is easily bought and after negotiating with the Erratics captain he threw down the wicket at Fowles's end to end his innings, pocketing himself a tidy sum in the process.

This brought Carl Jacobs to the crease, a picture of serenity despite there being 42 runs still required and 12 balls in which to get them. Clayton was on 11.

On strike Jacobs blocked the first ball, before hitting the next over the fence at mid-wicket. Two more boundaries and another six saw the target come into view, however with Clayton not looking like scoring any runs, Jacobs needed a single (or better yet, a three) off the last ball to keep the strike. Ever the Chairman he approached Sheppard, slipped him £20 and nudged the next ball to his position at mid-on. Sheppard reached down to field the ball, slipped over, kicked the ball backwards as he tried to recover, got a hand to it, then dropped it, apologised to his teammates, picked it up and dropped it again, kicked it away, before finally gathering and rolling it gently to the wicketkeeper. Jacobs scrambled home for three runs.

The last over began with Chilmark needing 19 to win. Jacobs clipped the first ball off his toes for four, but off the next managed just two out to mid-wicket. 13 required off four. Jacobs took a few strides towards the square leg umpire, looked to the clouds and started mumbling something unintelligible. Then he looked around, as if expecting to see something. But there was nothing. He

was confused. He mumbled again, did a strange little dance, then looked around. But still nothing. Finally he shrugged his shoulders and went to face the next ball. He swung hard but missed, then repeated the air swing on the following delivery. Just like that the game was lost. When the second last ball was bowled a disconsolate Jacobs nudged it to Sheppard at mid-on, who, without a payment coming either way, simply fielded it as normal. A single was scored.

With 12 runs required off the last ball the tension was relieved. Erratics players began joking around while Chilmark players headed for the beer fridge. There was still the formality of the final ball to be bowled though. Clayton, still there on 11 not out, was facing. He took guard, watched the ball from the bowlers' hand and launched it down the ground. He got plenty of height on it and a gust of wind took it well left of the sight screen at the Pettigrew end. The players watched it in awe as it sailed in a rainbow-like arc, over the fence and into the wind sock.

Umpire Cross performed the handstand signal that meant the shot was worth 12 runs and just like that Chilmark had won the game.

Celebrations went long into the night. Darren Lee rode Mr Pelham's horse through the streets of Chilmark with a flaming bottle of chilli zest Sambuca in his hand, yelling 'the horse man cometh!' to anyone who would listen. Ben Fowles etched his name on a poorly constructed honours board titled Frog Lane's Finest. When he wasn't looking his teammates used it as firewood. Charlie Morgan developed a fondness for Chinese Chardonnay and by night's end was speaking in Cantonese; while The Doc took to writing cynical prescriptions for his players. Ricky Corbin, who had returned from Salisbury Hospital to join in the celebrations, got one which read: take a mouthful of cement and Harden Up! Another he wrote for Brand King. It read simply: scissors.

While all this was going on Carl Jacobs returned home to make a sacrifice at his bird bath. He removed his whites, doused them in chili zest Sambuca and burnt them next to some Arabian incense. He began chanting and muttering thanks to his mystical witch doctor for keeping the rain away and allowing him to have the greatest day of cricket ever. He was lost in this reverie when a heavy downpour soaked him from head to toe and brought him back around. Looking up he saw Helen with the garden hose telling him to put some bloody clothes on.