

## Match report Oxford Downs, 6 August 2017

Getting two sides out on the same weekend mid school holidays, and relaying the gear bag from Hampshire to North Oxfordshire, is I think always an excellent achievement. On the day our batting didn't attain those same lofty heights. Which was a shame, because the match was there for the winning after a good effort in the field. Having being let down twice last minute by opponents in prior weeks, and a washed out match the day before we were clearly short of a gallop.

In terms of the physicality, with 2 Brookes, 1 Robertson and a Baldwin we more than matched them but perhaps in the end the altitude got to us. Clearly we didn't play for the full 80. Still I am sure the boys have gone back and studied the tape and hopefully learned from it.

As the team gathered the sun was out, finally, after the solar eclipse that had lasted basically from mid July and would continue throughout most of August. The ground was immaculate. With Justin keeping and needing to leave by 5 to get to the evening session of the Athletics in Stratford, I had told the opposition on Thursday that we would be bowling first. So with another deluge overnight arriving at the ground it seemed like a good decision.

They posted 197-9 off 48 overs. Baldwin began with his usual menace and was generally too good to find the edge. He ended with 1-30 off 9 having removed the previous year's danger man for not many. Henry Collier effected a neat run out and at the other Robertson had also started well but faded as the beverages he had onboarded the night before celebrating his 30<sup>th</sup> began to take toll. Both Brookes snared a wicket each in the middle order with Zinzan beginning the over with spin and then 5<sup>th</sup> ball sending the keeper back a couple of yards to bowl seam up off the same short runup promptly getting the ball to reverse and castling their non-plussed captain with an inswinging yorker.

Graeme Thomson toiled honestly into the gentle breeze with his slow left arm spin interlaced with the odd shaping arm ball for scant reward: 1-36 off 12. Henry Collier picked up 1 for 32 off 7 and then it was left to 70 year old local veteran and MCC member Alan Tidy who was just that mopping up their tail with a cunning 3-16 off 5. Finally they declared at 197-9 off 48.

The Downs were pretty sure they were at least 20 short and it was clear after an ample tea that we were likely to get only about 38 back. As of course necessity demanded Justin opened and clearly focused on the train he was targeting duly lasted only the two balls. At least the first one went for 4. Sunny Nathu and Hamish Lang put on 23 until Nathu trudged back for 11 and then Henry and Hamish added a further 53 including a gigantic lofted 6 over extra cover from Henry that cleared the clubhouse (this was no short boundary) nearly ending up in a children's playground. Sadly shortly after the blood rush he departed for a well made 35. In doing so the Club lurched from 80 for 2 to 89 for 7 with Lang departing for a careful, but well made 27, both Brookes who symmetrically faced just 4 balls each with neither troubling the scorer and then the skipper

contributed only 6 being caught ridiculously well at midwicket . So almost game set and match.

But Robertson and Baldwin (who luckily had just arrived back from Oxford Train station in time) had other ideas. They put on a quick fire 44 with 9 fours between them and just as we dared to believe both were dismissed in quick succession for 16 and 33 respectively. Alan was tidied up at the other end leaving Thommo 1 not out and stranded.

This is a good match against a decent club who also value the fixture. Hopefully we will reverse the result next year.

Richard Boon

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