

LNZCC v Oxted & Limpsfield CC

7 May 2023

Match report by Hamish Falls-Anderson

On a morning that could certainly be described as 'up in the air' where we didn't know if the game was going to proceed thanks to a wet pitch, The man from the deep south Mr. Leith Cowie then delivered the good news that the match would proceed but with a delayed start.

Shekhar Aryan who yet again with such dedication and love for the club travelled tirelessly down from Leeds was the first to arrive and informed us a music, food, and beer festival was on next to the ground. Perhaps this beer and food festival motivated a few of us to hurry to the ground despite the average weather as the very next thing a photo appeared on WhatsApp of Andrew Barkle having his first and by no means last pint of the day.

Following pints of beer, some sort of pre-match bean dish for lunch (which Barkle informs me was "Bloody average"), a pitch report from Leithal aka Mr. Clutha while sporting some interesting sunglasses, and a toss in which LNZ won and chose to bowl, play got underway just before 2 pm. Unfortunately due to some naivety and also inexperience on London's overground train network, Hamish Falls-Anderson found himself rather late so LNZ began their fielding effort with 10.

Despite not being there I am informed that Mike McLean and James Leslie took the new ball and opened up rather nicely, upon finally arriving I continued to see McLean and Leslie bowl a teasing line and length creating many chances. McLean in particular bowled in some superb areas but was very unlucky to go unrewarded. The Oxted and Limpsfield opening batsmen got off to a slow but steady start.

In search of a wicket, spin was introduced in the form of Barkle and pace continued with Shekhar Aryan gracing us with his almost pitch-length follow-throughs from the other end. Barkle and Aryan bowled nicely in a partnership, with Aryan honing in on a superb line but failed to catch the outside edge of the frequently dangling bat. After creating a few chances that didn't go to hand Barkle struck first with the batsman being adjudged LBW after mistakenly going back on a dead wicket. Oxted found themselves at 40-1. Soon after Aryan joined in on the wicket-taking having the Oxted overseas pro caught at slip off the back of his bat following a failed pull shot I may add for naught. Adam Khanbhai quite rightly described his innings as "the best looking two ball duck" he'd ever seen after the Aussie pro played an exquisite cover drive first ball only to find a fielder.

After a few glasses of orange juice at the drinks break, Falls-Anderson was thrown the ball and had 3 consecutive LBW appeals turned down in the first 3 balls of his spell, 2 of which looked fairly adjacent, only to then finally undo the Oxted opener to take the off peg with Oxted now 54-3. Barkle and Falls-Anderson bowled tidily in an off-spinning partnership tying the batsmen down, this proved fruitful as Falls-Anderson claimed his second seeing the No.5 beautifully stumped by Khanbhai. Following a good partnership between two of the Oxted batsmen Falls-Anderson struck again having the Oxted danger man caught at long-on by a well-composed Mark Epps.

When the 5th wicket fell it brought LNZ match manager turned traitor Leith Cowie to the crease for Oxted thanks to filling in after they only had 10 players and we had 12. Leith proved he is well and truly 'Leithal' by getting off the mark with an enormous six he was however soon to be dismissed by an absolutely superb catch at cover by Leslie handing debutant Max Devonshire his first wicket for the club. When Leith was dismissed the score sat at 118 for 6.

The opening bowlers McLean and Leslie returned to the crease in an attempt to 'finish the job' both bowling superbly and picking up a wicket each but somehow Oxted batted out their 40 overs despite many a ball narrowly missing the stumps. At the close of the innings, Oxted were left 141 for 8.

Following an interesting lunch spread provided by Oxted which in fairness offered a huge variety of different cakes and some horrendously flat beer which both Barkle and I were immensely displeased about play got back underway with George Moore and Devonshire opening, facing up to Mr Clutha who took the new rock for Oxted. Cowie opened up superbly for Oxted and was soon to be rewarded by trapping Devonshire in front with a ball that kept dreadfully low, Moore was joined by Khanbhai and the two of them went about resurrecting things superbly following the early wicket with some lovely stroke play that was very easy on the eye.

When George fell for a well compiled 17 LNZ were 37 for 2. Epps then joined in on the fine stroke play before Khanbhai was rather erroneously adjudged LBW to a ball that may well have missed a second set of stumps. This brought Shaun Ramati to the crease who went about his innings superbly rotating the strike well with Epps and operating with a risk-free approach. Epps was then dismissed bringing the esteemed and incomparable Tony Penman to the crease.

TP who has undoubtedly been involved in countless LNZ run chases over the years looked very elegant and composed while taking no risks at all, batting with Ramati this was working superbly but then Ramati was dismissed bringing Aryan to the crease. TP

and Aryan continued forth in the chase seeing off what was some niggly and teasing bowling from Oxted. When Aryan was dismissed another LNZ stalwart entered the fray in the form of Barkle. Still with 38 to win we found ourselves with another potential 'Rosé-gate-esque' incident on our hands as not long before two wickets fell in relatively quick succession a large round of beers had been purchased on the sideline.

Barkle looked to put an end to the looming 'Lager-Gate' on the cards with some absolutely fantastic textbook batting which saw shots to all parts of the ground that just about any player would be proud of, Barkle then slightly mistimed an intended straight drive which saw the bowler drop a caught & bowled while breaking his finger in the process.

Now down to 9 men, we gave Oxted a fielder. LNZ needed 10 to win against the 9 men of Oxted and the Bayern Munich shirt-wearing sub-fielder when Barkle lofted one towards mid-wicket only to be sublimely caught by double-agent Leith Cowie charging in off the boundary and somehow holding on. With 10 to win, 3 wickets in hand, and only 4 overs to spare 'Lager-Gate was well and truly looming' Falls-Anderson came to the wicket and could only add one before being bowled, James Leslie then fell the very next ball to see LNZ needing 6 off 10 with one wicket in hand.

With the game on the line and tension levels high, Mike McClean trudged to the crease epitomising the look of a tail-ender in ankle socks, un-spiked running shoes and his trousers caught up in his pad straps a managed to do his job superbly a managed to noodle a single getting the immensely determined and trusty TP back on strike to hopefully bring the game home for his beloved LNZ, unfortunately, it was not to be as TP was caught behind leaving us 5 runs short.

It was a very disappointing end to great game of cricket, arguably it shouldn't have been a close game given how well we batted in the middle period of the game but as always it was a fantastic day out for the men in red, white and silver and the tough pain of the tough loss thankfully wore off as libations were enjoyed while listening to post-match speeches and watching the sun go down.

We move forward and hopefully can register a win against the Flashmen this coming weekend!

Despite taking a game-winning catch for the opposition and bowling superbly for them too a huge thank you must go to Leith Cowie for all the work he put into arranging a superb day enjoyed by all.