

## **LNZCC v Earlswood Strollers CC**

27 May 2023

Match report by Hamish Falls-Anderson

I would like to begin simply with a thank you, it is unbeknownst to me as to who exactly I am thanking but it is whoever removed themselves from Saturday's original team sheet thus freeing up a spot for me to play, I am forever in debt you as I genuinely believe Saturday's festivities were my most ever enjoyable on a cricket field, however, to describe Wormsley as simply a "cricket field" is an insult. I ponder to myself how do you describe Wormsley? and despite my deep love for a superlative I fail to see how any word or phrase can truly convey how incredible Wormsley is, you could perhaps describe your favourite place as "breathtaking" but Wormsley is beyond superlatives, it simply just is Wormsley!

At first arrival we had clearly made our way to the incorrect postcode when we found ourselves in the car park of an industrial estate, thankfully Andrew Haines (Frosty/Hainsey) and I were not the only two to make this mistake as we came across Adam Khanbhai (looking awfully like maverick from Top Gun behind the wheel of his car with his aviator sunglasses) also seeming lost in this car park, AK's co-pilot Vaughan Robertson soon came to the rescue and re-navigated us to the correct entrance while passenger Tim Barringer nibbled on Captain AK's recently purchased "upper-class snacks that supposedly came with a clipped accent and an air of condescension"

Once making our way to a very leafy-looking entrance in which stood a gatehouse that's square meterage would just about surpass any flat in London we were certain we had arrived at the Getty Estate.

Making our way down the tree-lined driveway, past the opera theatre Hainsey made me aware that in years gone by, Wormsley was by no means a happy hunting ground for London New Zealand in fact far from it, a battlefield bearing many slain LNZ soldiers one might say. Despite the 70th anniversary massacre of 2021 at the hands of Mr. Joshua Cunis, LNZ put the dark day behind them and arrived in superb spirits looking forward to the day ahead without a cloud in the sky.

Upon making our way inside the pavilion with its incredible replica thatched roof, I was immensely pleased as was just about everyone else in the team that my behemoth of a cricket bag didn't take up half the changing room for once like it had been at previous fixtures. Following an inspection of the pitch and other immensities a coin was tossed, The Strollers captain called correctly and asked the men in red, silver, and blue to have a bowl.

Although the toss had been completed, play was far from getting underway as Bernard, manager of The Strollers was delighted to inform everyone what as he liked to call it a "Bacardi Breezer" was which in truth was a Pink vodka WKD that was about to sit in the basking sun all day. We were then informed that the "Bacardi Breezer" of which there was one for each team would go to the player who made the biggest cock up of the day and be skulled post-match. As Bernard strongly informed us this "Breezer" strictly had to go in one gulp and if not, the player unlucky enough to be drinking it would be presented with another one, so it was safe to say everyone was going to be fully focused in the field.

Following many a photo, play got underway with Ryan 'Rhino' Allan and Sam Martin opening up with the fresh rock for LNZ. The opening over of the match from Rhino was absolutely superb where he cut in half The Strollers opening batsmen just about every single ball, how that over went wicketless is beyond me. It appeared the fateful 70th anniversary day at Wormsley was a distant memory and we were here to do battle after that opening over however The Strollers were soon to make the most of the ball coming on nicely and lightning fast outfield. In the match description on the website the outfield was likened to a 'Billiard Table', this couldn't have been more correct with nearly anything off the bat racing to the fence.

Despite both Rhino and Sam bowling a tidy line and length we were up against some very well-organised openers who pounced on anything that was even slightly over-pitched and with the incredible grounds they got full value for their shots if anything too much value. Before we knew it, The Strollers were 50 without loss and it looked like another long day of chasing leather around Wormsley for LNZ.

A bowling change was then made in the form of Hamish Falls-Anderson and his off breaks taking Martin's end with the intention that taking some pace off the ball may create some chances and stem the flow of runs. Bringing spin on early clearly proved to be the right idea as in Falls-Anderson's opening over the outside edge was caught twice, unfortunately, both falling safe between slip and keeper, and to make it worse running for 4 across the carpet outfield. Falls-Anderson then managed to get a breakthrough, trapping the very dangerous Strollers opener in front for 40; when the wicket fell, the score sat at 70 for 1.

Vaughan Robertson then entered the bowling crease and replaced Rhino, Robertson immediately bowled a nagging line and length, asking questions of both batsmen while Falls- Anderson continued to bowl in consistent areas outside the off stump tying the

batsmen down and then provoking a big shot in which the remaining Strollers opener was bowled, the score now at 90 for 2.

Following a huge LBW appeal which saw Falls-Anderson on the floor in disbelief at the sight of seeing umpire Doughty's hands by his sides, HFA managed to strike twice in 3 balls, firstly with a one-handed caught and bowled and then another LBW which saw their captain dismissed for a duck. After the very promising start that the Strollers got off to, LNZ managed to get a foot back in the game with the score now at 117 for 4. Robertson continued to bowl a hard length into the deck and was finally rewarded at the very end of his spell catching the outside edge of the Strollers no.7 only for it to appear wicketkeeper Sam Grayling was headed in the wrong direction to then stick out a hand and hold on, leaving the other to be used in getting one hand on the three fielding points.

Debutant Maggie Martin entered the attack along with a man who couldn't be further from a debutant in Andrew Barkle. These two bowled well together in a partnership and Barkle in particular put the shackles on the Strollers batsmen with some very tidy off-spin, he used the crease well, creating angles and bowling a line that was very difficult to score from.

The 6th wicket fell when Tim Barringer produced a runout with the score now at 138 for 6.

Following some aggressive batting from the Strollers middle order which kept their score ticking over nicely Maggie Martin opened her wicket taking account for the club when The Strollers No.6 skied one high in the air only for Richard Burgess to very nonchalantly get underneath it and make what was a difficult catch look effortless. Speaking of high catches, someone who made a high catch look anything but effortless was Rhino when he was underneath a high ball only for him to decide the sun was obstructing his view and then took cover with his hands over his head. [Here is Michael Hussey doing something very similar for Australia](#). With this Rhino put himself well in contention for the 'Bacardi Breezer'.

After Rhino took cover and we all watched the ball hit the ground, Barkle struck with a very adjacent-looking LBW, by now LNZ had really pulled it back, and when considering the favourable batting conditions a potentially sub-par score from The Strollers was on the cards with the score at 163 for 8. The sub-par score then came to fruition when Maggie Martin and Barkle both captured their 2nd wickets leaving The Strollers all out for 173.

With lunch not quite ready it was agreed LNZ would bat for around half an hour before lunch was served, more to follow on the lunch soon but by crikey was it worth the wait!

Khanbhai and Haines set forth endeavouring to stick around through to lunch which was just around the corner however after both striking glorious 4s they were both dismissed, With AK getting bowled and Frosty caught at mid-wicket and to make it worse off the bowling of an 11-year-old. Josh Wright came in at three and looked accomplished only to continue the tradition set by the openers of hitting a four and then getting out when he went back to one that kept low and was given his marching orders. At 19 for 3 lunch couldn't come around any sooner but Sam Grayling and Richard Burgess went about resurrecting the innings well, batting intelligently and taking no risks; they saw us through to lunch with the score at 33 for 3.

The lunch offering really was quite something with the intention of being a superbly cooked steak burger but thanks to a wedding hosted at Wormsley being over-catered there was also Greek salad, hummus, pita bread but most importantly meringues with strawberries and cream! It really was quite a feast - Frosty mentioned that getting out felt a bit better as he could fill his boots at lunch not having to head back out and bat! In the last match report I touched upon the copious amount of rocky road slice I had throughout the batting innings but I believe I exceeded that at Wormsley with the amount of the Greek food I tucked into!

Following the delicious spread play got back underway with Grayling and Burgess continuing forth, the two batted together superbly with fine stroke play all around the ground. The Strollers were bowling in perfectly good areas but the two LNZ batsmen moved their feet exceptionally well and their shot placement in between fielders was something to behold. After being on edge at 19 for 3 these 2 certainly settled the nerves and got us through to 88 when the 4th wicket fell with Grayling caught behind for a very well-compiled and beautiful to-watch 37.

Tim Barringer then entered the fray and continued on in the run chase with Burge, the two kept capitalising on the loose balls and ticked the score over to 110 before Burgess was adjudged LBW for 45. This was quite some innings from the esteemed Burge, he went in with another potential defeat at Wormsley for LNZ and in our hour of need stood right up and showed us his class, following his innings of 45 he is now 55 runs off being LNZ's highest ever run scorer. When Burgess fell it brought Maggie Martin to the crease, once she got going she was all over The Strollers attack. Martin and Barringer batted superbly together, timing the ball exceptionally well and piercing the gaps with total precision. These two put on a cut-shot masterclass with runs flowing to the point boundary and before we knew it victory had been secured by 5 wickets.

Maggie who was no doubt watched on by a very proud 'Uncle Sam' had a very fine debut knock and was left undefeated on 27 while Barringer was also not out on an exquisite 35. Watching these two make light work of the run chase with the remarkable backdrop of the Buckinghamshire Hills on a picturesque day while enjoying great conversation on the banks and sipping on a beer truly was the epitome of a perfect day, it displayed how cricket is truly an art form and reminded us why it is the game we love.

The post-match festivities were superb as always, We thanked The Strollers for their immense generosity in having the fixture at Wormsley where an absolutely superb day was enjoyed by all well all bar Mr. Samuel Grayling who was tasked with necking the "Bacardi Breezer" for his outrageous decision to wear the famous Nottman cap backward while wicketkeeping with a baseball mask on. Despite some other woeful fielding moments, nothing came close to this, continuing with his baseball theme for the day, and in total fairness to Sammy, he 'stepped up to the plate' and necked his breezer in one. I think it's safe to say he won't be wearing his Nottmann cap backward again anytime soon.

It may be noted that I played another match on Sunday down in Hampshire with a few other LNZ members at a perfectly nice village ground however I commented that "it felt like a slum" after having played at Wormsley the day before, we are truly privileged to have played at such a remarkable ground and cannot thank The Strollers enough for their generosity and efforts for arranging the match.

Thanks must also go to Andrew Neal and Sam Martin for their time in arranging, match managing, and captaining a day that I struggle to see being bettered in the LNZ calendar.