

What is wandering cricket?

Our opposition on Saturday are a club that is 62 years old. 3 gentlemen fielding in their university 2nd XI at point, cover and mid off in 1956 through which a number of balls were hit and to which none of them laid a hand on. They were collectively referred to that day as Grannies. Thus, the Club we played at Sheffield Park, only a few years our junior, came into being. Until 5 years ago we had never played against each other. Now it would appear we have more and more in common. Two wandering teams. LNZCC like many wandering teams have no home ground. Like us The Grannies have no home ground, however Sheffield Park is one place they get to play on a regular basis. And where LNZCC are very lucky to have become a recent regular fixture. Before the match was started Ryan Edwards in his first game for the Club in over 10 years playing in his 71st game for the Club received his Notman Cap for having played more than 5 matches.

So the trick with any team sport is to get your team to the venue to begin the fixture. For whatever reasons we started with 8 players taking the field and eventually had 11 at the ground after 12 or so overs whereby The Grannies who had elected to bat, provided us with 2 fielders until we were quorent (spp.) and they had added 60 odd runs. Andrew Haines began as wicket keeper and kept the pressure on with some clean takes. The match was being played under the traditional local rules of being a declaration match whereby the team batting first get to declare at a time that allows the team batting 2nd a sporting chance to chase down their total. Starting half an hour late at midday The Grannies started at a decent clip. Leith Cowie fresh from New Plymouth in his 2nd match for the club opened with Simon Yule 8 hours after landing from his home in Hong Kong. Simon eventually found his length not before their left handed opening bat Sean made a brisk start. Leith wound up the pace & settled into a rhythm off his long run, with the arrival of Aaron Bowes in his 1st match for the Club against another Club held onto a screamer in the covers from Sean their opening bat off Leith's bowling as the hard hitting Aussie departed for 40 with the score at 48. Simon was replaced by returning Club stalwart Ryan Edwards who in his 71st match for LNZCC since his debut in 1995 and first game in England in 8 years hit a length and started to make his mark. Leith picked up a 2nd wicket as Josh Wright held onto a screamer at 1st slip. Andrew Haines was replaced by Khanbhai and the arrival of Peter Bellamy meant we had an XI on the field in the 12th over. We went to lunch with The Grannies poised on 99 runs off 22 overs, of which Leith had bowled 11 on the trot. Meanwhile at the other end Ryan Edwards was replaced by TP who quickly got into his work and restricted the run rate significantly. The 3rd wicket partnership had added 49 runs at lunch and upon the re start the skipper came on and removed their number 4 for 31 of those runs LBW playing back to his first ball of his spell. The very next ball saw a very straight delivery declined when appealed for an LBW. Leith kept bowling off his long run - bearing in mind the temperature in excess of 30 degrees celcius most the day this was not insignificant effort, especially given his large night the night before. When we went for drinks break their opening bat was finally out caught by Edwards off Martin for a jug avoiding 45 runs and The Grannies were 151 with young Harry Yeates in his first bat in 2 years rapidly approaching a 50 having been dropped 3 times by now of the 5 times we managed to drop him. Leith was eventually replaced with a couple of overs from Edwards and then TP again whose distress at one of these dropped catches was revealed when we finally held one - their skipper for 6 - which was TP's 250th wicket for the Club. There followed a slew of wickets as TP was on a hat trick and The Grannies lost wickets regularly with Harry Yeates still accumulating runs to be eventually out to the guile of Andrew Haines' (yes you read it right) off spin, very well caught by Aaron Bowes at cover. The Grannies eventually got through to 219 all out off 50 overs with TP finishing with 3-49 off 10, Leith Cowie 3-49 off 16, Haines 2-7 off 4 and Martin 2-46 off 11 overs.

The Grannies had made reasonable progress with runs but so too were we with wickets. Thus the conundrum of when to declare as the batting side and when to feed runs of go for wickets as the bowling side. As a bunch of Kiwis we kept going for wickets.

So by the time we took the 10th wicket they were on 219 off 50 overs. In theory leaving is 40 overs to get their total. With the limit on overs being set against 20 overs from 6:00pm and whatever can be bowled before that time.

220 to win off what should be about 40 overs. Opening up for LNZZC were Josh Wright with a 99 at the same venue against The Grannies 2 years prior and Andrew Haines on 93* from last season's rain affected match. Not quite reading the script they both continued their innings from 12 and 24 months prior with shots that defied the current match situation. Suffice to say they were both out within the first 8 overs with the score at 41. Adam Khanbhai came and went quickly and Aaron Barnes was joined by Peter Bellamy who went to an outstanding catch at gully by the Aussie battler Sean Keaton, catch of the match. Slightly better than Aaron's effort to dismiss Sean himself.

This brought together Aaron Bowes who had been in for a bit by now and Ryan Edwards who combined in a very productive partnership of 58 runs before Ryan was out LBW and then soon after reaching his 50 Aaron was caught on the mid wicket boundary, which defied his entire innings in terms of risk free, well managed and a very tidy debut innings for the Club. At this stage LNZZC were 116 for 6 requiring 104 runs with 15 overs to go. John McMullan and the skipper shared a brief partnership of 1 to see John caught for 2 off the bowling of Jon Staniforth (who once ran a 10.7 100m at QEII Stadium in Christchurch in 1976). Prior to the loss of Edwards and Bowes we were cruising along nicely. Once the breaks came on it was evident that The Grannies might choose to look to keep us in the game. Leith Cowie joined the skipper with 15 overs to face, just under 7 runs an over required and a field spread far and wide. Boundaries were not easy to come by the bowling was very tight and there were very few singles on offer. The mentality to look for a draw was something neither batsmen would naturally describe as an innate quality or desire. But as the runs dried up, the bowling became tighter and the opposition desire for wickets only increased so too did their resolve to hang in there. All apart from Martin the skipper missing a full straight one that somehow bounced sideways to miss the off stump and then proceeded to sky one to the Opposition skipper at mid off only to see him shell it...! The Grannies played dit dead right as the only person with the discipline to face down the dot balls and reverse the pressure was Leith. Somehow Martin didn't get himself out and LNZZC limped through to 177 for 7 off what turned out to be 40 overs on the dot.

Personally i would say that this was an incredibly satisfying game of cricket and despite the result the sense wafter the match is that everyone else seemed to feel the same. Such is the joy of wandering cricket bringing people from all walks of life together into an historic landscape designed by Capability Brown and steeped in cricket history. We are incredibly lucky to be able to do this and should never take it for granted.

Thank you to The Grannies for the quality lunch, ground and venue. Thank you Toby for my lifeline.

Thank you to their umpire Bill and our perennial man behind the stumps Martin Conway. Thank you too to Ryan's two boys Sonny and George also over from NZ with their Dad who minded the team mascot Willow (seen in the photo being held by Martin Conway) very well all day.

Man of the match for his 3-49 off 16 overs of pace + mature batting beyond his years at the end to put on an unbeaten partnership of 60 with the skipper and presented with a fine burgundy dominated by Martin Conway from Berry Brothers and Rudd was Leith Cowie.