**DCSCC vs Belmont and the Pudding** Thursday, 23 June 2023

Ian B was our captain and opted to put us in to bat first. Pat Card and Rob Briggs (his first appearance on the greensward this season) strode manfully out to face the opposition, not knowing what they were going out to meet: The Pudding.

Our fiendish opponents were well cognisant of the conditions of the Belmont wicket. It had all the life and bounce of a flat pancake, or a black pudding. The outfield was not much better: bumpy and, like Che Guevara’s beard, much in need of a close shave. The opening bowlers tossed up looping pies which our unsuspecting batsmen inevitably had some difficulty getting away. These were conditions that took a little getting used to before you could actually hit the ball. One end, in particular, saw the ball not so much bounce as grovel along the floor while Rob took a mighty swipe which passed a foot or so clear above it. The inevitable happened. Another slow delivery turned a fraction on the pudding and hit Rob somewhere just above the ankle, plumb in front of the stumps. LBW.

Pat Card, now having seen how low things could go, responded by hitting one mighty six over mid-wicket, over the surrounding trees and into a neighbouring property. It thankfully missed the window that looked over the ground, but it hit something (the garden shed?) and disappeared. Belmont continued with a replacement ball, which Pat duly smacked mid-wicket again, only for some irritating fielder to actually catch it. Shame. Pat was caught out on 28.

Kris C and Phil H now faced the continuing pie-shoot. If you could figure out how to manage the variable bounce and get through the first few balls, you could survive. Unfortunately, Kris didn’t. He lost his bails to the one quick bowler Belmont could employ. Phil struggled on, finally getting his rhythm and striking one long four straight back past the bowler (Stuart Green, DCSCC rogue, playing for the opposition!). The next ball he swivelled and pulled for another four past square leg. Except in swivelling, Phil’s boot remained stuck in the Pudding and his knee twisted like a corkscrew. Collapse of stout party. He retired hurt on 21.

Guy and Rory were now at the crease. Again it took a little while before they could get the measure of the wicket but then they started striking the ball to all quarters. Some lovely cover drives from Guy took him along nicely until he retired on a maximum 30, to be replaced by Aidan. Rory opted for the aerial route, a big six, before continuing with singles, twos and fours, partnered by an athletic Aidan whose running between the wickets kept Rory on strike. Rory finished with a final six which brought him a maximum, and an unselfish 1 for Aidan as we closed out twenty overs. Total: a respectable 128 on poor wicket.

Now it was the turn of Belmont to take some of their own medicine. Your chairman opted to open the bowling against a left-hander who hit nothing until the last ball of the over which swung in nicely to remove his middle stump. Guy opened the other end and, third ball down, the batsman swung hopefully and edged it up in the air and over his head. Phil Hancock - he of a swelling knee and similar stomach and placed as first slip so he wouldn’t need to move much – hobbled backwards like a pregnant wildebeest and snatched the ball out of the air. Wonderful! What courage! What a mighty man! Both opening batsmen gone for zero.

And so it went on. Unlike DCSCC, none of Belmont could really come to terms with the Pudding and so wickets kept falling. Guy bowled another who took a mighty swipe only to play on. Ian replaced your correspondent and clean bowled their fourth batsman, and then it was Nigel’s turn. Ha ha! How the opposition suffered. They might clonk Nigel to the boundary if they got lucky, but they got bowled if they didn’t. Nigel duly claimed two wickets. Aidan got another, first ball with a glorious off-break that the batsman edged over his head which this time Eckart reached for, gloved higher and then caught with an adventurous juggle. Kris C came on to bowl and quickly claimed two scalps, one after the other – the first the batsman (poor Stuart) played on; the second a big hoik up into the air which Kris scampered after and caught himself.

We were all in the action. Rob in particular deserves honourable mention for galloping over a hundred yards from deep fine leg to deep mid-wicket to protect the boundary every time a left- and a right-hander exchanged strikes. Belmont were behind in the run chase however and needed 28 off the final over if they were to catch us. Then Rory came on to bowl – the final twist of the screw. His extravagant leggies bamboozled everyone (not, it must be said, Eckart who plunged around one side to the other behind the stumps). In the middle of his one and final over, Rory changed to fire two or three deliveries at the speed of light, only to change back to send down a wide or two (or seven). Having so far not scored a run himself, the batsman managed at last to hit the last ball of the over - up above Rory, only to be caught by Kris, further back. Out! In twenty overs, Belmont had scored 108.

It was, in the end, a thoroughly entertaining match where everyone played their part in another famous victory. So DCSCC go marching on. Congratulations everyone!