**DCSCC vs Durham Farmers, MC1, 15 June 2023**

This was truly an intense, closely contested match between two big-hitting, fast bowling and highly competitive teams. Leadership through the evening changed sides several times, one side seeming to hold the advantage, then the other, such that no one could foretell the result – who would be celebrating and who would be cursing their fate - until the very last ball.

Farmers elected to go in first on a dry, flat wicket which seemed to favour the batsmen. However, they were soon facing the swing of your chairman correspondent, sending down deliveries more curved than bananas, and the red meteors of Vinay who caught and bowled one of the openers. Nonetheless, Farmers were not so easily ploughed under, so scything blades saw the ball fly to the distant boundary on a variety of occasions - Nigel, Ian and Hilal did well to contain a number of their more aggressive shots. Then the diabolical duo entered the fray: the return of the captain Chris (earlier seen actually practising in a distant net, as if we couldn’t see such reprehensible behaviour!) and our answer to Shane Warne – Rory My Goodness. Chris galloped in, firing thunderbolts and Rory – when he wasn’t busy on the boundary catching one agricultural heave – was corkscrewing leggies with more spin than my washing machine. Wickets fell. Spirits soared. Eventually the opposition managed 126 for 4 and thus it was the turn of DCSCC to open their account. And hereafter begins the controversy…

Our openers were Vinay and Phil Hancock, who both impressed all onlookers with their entertaining styles: Vinay by zonking the ball to all quarters; Phil by enthusiastically waving his bat at us - only for a certain umpire to rule that he’d nicked it behind. No way! protested Phil. On your way! commanded our returning captain and stand-in umpire Chris. (This was just the first of controversial umpiring decisions, as will be recounted further)

Step forward Rory, another zonking batsman. Vinay retired on 31 to be replaced by Mujeeb; Rory retired soon after, scoring a boundary to reach 30. Aiden went in next. A teenage bowler, short in stature but with a run-up longer than the absent Stevie B, eventually bowled both Aidan and Mujeeb (though not without conceding a few runs) so Hilal and Chris came to the crease, Vinay replacing Chris as umpire.

The next controversy occurred when Hilal was rudely bounced – the ball sailing high over his head. He waved his bat as the bullet flew past, more to wave goodbye to it since it was too high to actually hit, but all the fielders cried ‘Owzat!’ Not out! ruled yours truly, the umpire, who never heard the alleged nick. Neither batsman nor umpire were at all moved by the strength of the appeal, despite much moaning and complaining by the opposition.

The mood of the game was somewhat soured by this turn of events. Umpires were changed: Aidan replacing your correspondent. Chris was the next to fall to another entertaining decision – he opted to play a forward defensive knee to one delivery, as if bending and lowering his blade to some imaginary princess, only for Vinay to be unimpressed, awarding him an LBW for his gesture.

Hilal was caught out pulling so the next two duly facing the onslaught were Eckart and Ian. Both battled manfully, though now dealing in singles rather than boundaries and the opposition were growing in confidence with every ball bowled. 20 runs from the last four overs were required for victory. Alas! the early charge of DCSCC now petered out as Ian was stumped and Eckart was caught low down at mid-wicket. The team’s great greying duo, Nigel and your chairman, were the last to bat: could they deliver the necessary in the final rounds? A scampered (sort of) single here and another there… but it was beginning to look impossible. Despite flailing bats, boundaries were not to be had. Your chairman was hit full on the pads by one delivery, accompanied by yet another loud appeal, but umpire Aidan ruled not out. Hmmm. Unimpressed by his failure to be dismissed, however, your chairman correspondent elected to run himself out – a strategic suicide - as soon as possible thereafter.

And thus strode to the crease ‘last chance’ Vinay, he of the opening orders which had earlier smacked the ball in every direction known to geometry. But precious few balls were left in the match, many more runs were needed, and – suspecting what might be attempted – every fielder was now rather unsportingly sent to line the border.

A single here, three runs there, could our brave sloggers do it? It came at last to the final ball of the match and four runs were needed to win. Vinay to face. Everyone around poised to stop him… the bowler sent down his best… *Bang*! Vinay swung hard and the ball soared up, up into the blue…and over the boundary for a six! Victory was ours! DCSCC had won and Vinay will undoubtedly pass into the annals of cricket to be celebrated ever after as the saviour of lost causes.

Congratulations everyone. A truly memorable match!