**DCSCC vs Sunderland NAS cricket club, Monday 12 June 2023**

South Hetton Cricket Club was the venue for this titanic encounter. An interesting cricket ground. It was firm, well-manicured, a fast outfield, and it sloped across the wicket, like Lords (though they haven’t hosted us there, yet). The boundary on the lower side was not much more than 22 yards away; on t’other side any onlookers were barely visible.

Sunderland NAS possessed a team of varying ages and talents, much like DCSCC except their mean age was probably ten years greater than ours, despite your Chairman and cricket correspondent doing his best to even the averages.

The NAS team boasted only ten members so were put into bat. Our soon-to-be-leaving captain Stevie B and your chairman correspondent opened the bowling and the idiosyncrasies of this venue quickly became apparent. Stevie’s pace meant then anything missed behind went for four byes. For your chairman, the slope meant a mighty swing which continually beat the bat and wicket - doh! - but not, thankfully, Eckart’s gloves.

Any nudges from the batsmen tended to go to the boundary. The first opener retired on a maximum but Ian B clean bowled the other when he came on first change. Thereafter, wickets began to fall in between boundaries. Nigel bamboozled all who tried to face him giving away only four runs in four overs and gaining an LBW. Guy was the next bamboozler who similarly gained a wicket when the sorry batsmen couldn’t hit the ball, only pad it onto the stumps, for the bails to remain glued and unmoved, but the umpire graciously ruling LBW. Aiden and Hilal did well to contain a rather fine batsman who next came in to show us his flashing blade but most impressive of all was the long-awaited appearance of Phil Nathan who, when last seen in the 19th century, used to amble in off four paces before whipping in a red missile. This time he cantered to the crease from 15 yards and sent down rockets to remove the stumps twice in his one and only over. The opposition scored 122 off 20 overs, which says more about the closeness of the boundary than the strokeplay of the batsmen.

Man of the moment, in his last appearance before mingling with scousers, Stevie B opened the batting with Vinay. Both began to exploit the close boundary and fast outfield; though it has to be said that, rather perversely, Vinay opted most often to hit it to the longest, rather than the shortest side. On one occasion this meant that our opening pair had to run four runs when Vinay despatched the ball into the distant mists of South Hetton. Vinay soon retired on 31, Stevie probably sighing with relief that he didn’t have to run so much after that. Phil Nathan, the player that time forgot, came in at no. 3 and promptly pulled the first ball he faced to the boundary. Stevie soon retired on 32 and was replaced by Guy. The tall and the short of it was that these two took us home victoriously in 16 overs: Guy with elegance; Phil with belligerence, both scoring 24 each. So DCSCC scored 123 with no loss.

The opposition were graceful in defeat; Durham staff meanwhile were delighted to give Steve the perfect sending off. We then hastened in several cars across country to celebrate in the Three Horseshoes, which was only prevented from closing by the invasion of 13 thirsty cricketers. Thanks to Rory and Pat for their support, and special mention must be made finally of Mujeeb, escorting the convoy on an enormous motorbike, who neither batted, nor bowled nor was able to catch a ball either behind or in front of the boundary line - make sure he opens next time!) A great, winning performance from all involved, roll on the next contest!