**DCSCC vs KSOB** Tuesday, 21 May 2024

At last, after a season and a half of postponement and frustration, the day we were waiting for eventually arrived. Durham Staff were to play against King’s School Old Boys – a sporting opposition led by one niggly individual who always seems to ruffle our feathers. We had been debating all winter about how we were to going to make Fred the ‘keeper flounder in defeat, and now the awesome might of DCSCC – at least 13 of us – assembled at Maiden Castle on a dull and dreary evening determined to make dreams come true at this long-awaited contest.

Eleven of DCSCC took to the field – Guy staying back at first to rotate on later – with young Max opting to make up the numbers for the opposition who were one short. We were met in the centre by a somewhat worn wicket but Eckart produced a bright pink cherry for us to open the proceedings; your chairman correspondent taking the first over. Well, the wicket might have seen better days but it offered plenty of bounce and the pink bullet began to swing from the outset. So much so, that the second delivery of the day began to sail wide, the opening batsman overreached and, swinging mightily, he despatched the ball directly towards ‘Captain Casual’ Pat Card in the covers. Pat stuck out a right arm and caught the said missile as if in afterthought. Cool as an ice cube! End of the first over and KSOB were one down for no score.

Sean opened the other end but had to contend with a certain very niggly umpire. Fred’s aggressive interpretation of the rules meant he called wides and no-balls at every opportunity, but nonetheless Sean ignored all such provocation and tempted the other bat into hoisting the ball in Rory’s direction. Another cool catch and KSOB were two down in two overs for six. On our way!

Not so fast! KSOB knuckled down now and the next two batsmen carefully built a partnership. Resisting all-comers, they patiently accumulated singles and boundaries, resisting the wiles of Nigel and Aidan, and the first-time appearances of Joanne Fulton and Rajat Sharma. Despite Rajat sending down deceptive rockets, no further wickets fell and both bats eventually retired on thirty apiece. The two last batsmen replacing them continued to accumulate runs with no loss and KSOB finished on 106 for two in 18 overs. A respectable total.

Durham’s master blasters were Guy and Phill H, who went out to face none other than ‘dead-eye’ Ian Black. True to form, ‘dead-eye’ Ian dropped the ball on the same spot every time like a metronome, making for a slow start for our intrepid openers. At the other end, Kev Menton similarly didn’t offer much with his bowling and so it wasn’t until the third and fourth overs that our men got into their stride and started hitting boundaries. Then we began to accelerate, getting to 40 runs by the sixth over, until Guy suffered a change of mind on a slower delivery and was unceremoniously stumped by (groan) Fred. With a change of bowlers, Phill was next to go. Having just watched one delivery fly into orbit over his head, another similarly wild satellite tempted Phill to dip lower than a squatting duck, only for the ball to swoop down to remove his leg stump. How he could stoop so low for the ball to miss him, but not his wicket, was a testament to his contortionism, if not his judgement.

Rory and Pat were now the pair to push the score on. Rory with his trademark flamingo sweeps to leg, Pat with more agricultural hoiks into the distance. The runs flowed. Rory eventually retired on 30 and DCSCC were on 90 in fifteen overs for two when Pat was caught out on 20 going for another big hit.

The last two batsmen to face were Rajat and Raj, against competent new bowlers who were determined to give nothing away. The run rate slowed so our two were reduced to stealing singles as we got closer and closer to the end. The penultimate over and they ran like demons. One over to go and we needed just two runs for victory. First ball, dot. Second ball, Raj clipped to mid-wicket. Rajat set off to steal another single only for Raj to stand firm. Aaagh! Rajat was caught stranded halfway down and run out. Four balls left, two runs short and Eckart came out at the non-striker’s end. Third ball, dot. Tension was rising. Next ball, fast, pitched on leg, Raj got round and streaked it away for the winning runs. Celebrations all round. DCSCC had done it!

Congratulations to all who contributed, and particularly to our newcomers Joanne and Rajat who impressed on their first appearance and, we trust, enjoyed their turn on the greensward with the North East’s most distinguished cricket club. Here’s to our next victory!