**75th Anniversary match, DCSCC vs Durham City, the Racecourse, 23 June 20024**

Summer had arrived! Blue skies, bright sunshine and 21 degrees at midday at the Racecourse.

The Racecourse? We had not played here for a decade or more, not since certain aged members of the club had hair and younger members were still at primary school. (Huge thanks are due to the hard work undertaken by Chris Cowie and Vinay in arranging this fixture!) DCSCC cricketers and partners slowly came together, to assemble outside the clubhouse, to bask in the peerless day and beautiful setting, and to scratch their heads in wonder at how a flummox of academics could make such a pig’s ear of putting up a gazebo.

‘Hold this! What fits there? Where’s the No. 2 pole?’ And so the fun started: the metal framed puzzle went up, then down, then up, then it fell apart - an entertaining half hour passed quickly with little result except laughter and perhaps an idle concern that this was not the best demonstration of efficient teamwork that was likely to strike fear into the arriving opposition.

Eventually, the gazebo was erected (thanks Vinay and Ian), shuffled along and pinned down in an appropriate location; then chairs were set out and a number of onlookers settled down to watch the proceedings. Tension mounted as the toss was taken, decisions made and Guy and Eckart strode out to open the batting against a City side of wide age profile and varied talent (ditto for DCSCC, actually).

What was awaiting the batsmen out in the middle, however, was a playing surface that no self-respecting cricketer would ever want to visit again. The wicket was dry, wrinkled, with more lines and cracks than the face of 80-year-old rock legend Keith Richards, and the surface had as much life and bounce in it as a stale pancake. This provided no opportunity for our openers to stand tall and strike out manfully - it was more an occasion to drop the bat and protect your ankles from deliveries that scuttled through like angry cockroaches.

Guy was first to face, but could do nothing but block the occasional straight ball and watch the numerous wides and byes that grovelled along, below and beside him. Eckart had less luck, he lost his stumps to a lifeless stone in the second over. The score was three extras for one wicket and no runs off the bat.

Rory was next in but found, like Guy, that slow, low bowling on a flat pudding offered little chance for his trademark master blasting. And so, dear reader, the DCSCC innings took a long, Boycott-like time to advance and for runs to come. Boring over followed boring over with nothing other than the occasional single, wide and no-ball to trouble the scorer. Our batsmen, meanwhile, stuck to their guns, concentrated hard and refused to buckle as the bowlers changed but the scuttling cockroaches didn’t.

Hooray! After 15 overs of ones and twos we eventually gained a boundary. Half an hour later, another. Phew! It was exhausting work in the heat of the sun as our two heroes, out in the middle, at last began to accelerate as the opposition bowlers tired first. Loud applause as Rory reached 50. More one-legged flamingo shots then followed in quick succession as he raced to 60 then 70. Alas, on reaching 80 in the 36th over, the cockroaches got him, removing his leg stump. Minutes later, tiredness and cockroaches got Guy too, on reaching his fifty. But hearty congratulations were due: the two of them had spent over two hours in the sun together, resisting all assault and battering over 150 runs in reply (with the help of many a wayward bye or two).

Excitement levels then picked up as, with just four overs left to go, Vinay came in, quickly hoisted a four and then just as quickly was bowled by yet another low blow. Raj and Pat now faced. Raj received just one delivery and was given out LBW – a golden cockroach. Finally, three overs remaining, Chris Cowie came in and he and Pat threw caution to the wind and pushed the score on to finish with 183 for five, Pat muscling a boundary on the last ball.

After a delay for lunch, and for Guy and Rory to collapse and attempt to recover, it was time for the City to begin their reply. Opening the bowling was the welcome traditional pairing of your chairman and Steve Boothroyd, whose long run up on this day started in Liverpool. Yours truly conceded one run off the first over and gained a wicket, caught by Ian B, in his second. Steve bowled a maiden in his first and removed the stumps of Phil Hancock – opening for the City – in his third. Tough on Phil: a cruise missile that Steve dispatched at high speed and which refused to rise above ankle height.

Your chairman correspondent gained one further wicket – LBW in his fourth over – and was replaced by Nigel, while Steve gave way to brother Ian. A couple of overs later and Ian struck the timbers twice - one of his victims being young Max Hancock, frequently seen in DCSCC nets over the winter but, like his father, finding batting on the unpredictable Racecourse somewhat less enjoyable.

But City now brought together two experienced batsmen who began to strike out against all and sundry. Runs, and boundaries, flowed as bowlers changed - Vinay and Rob Briggs coming on to try and slow the rate. Rob’s first over puzzled the batsmen. His curving, bouncy run-up was much like you’d imagine a one-eyed kangaroo might deliver: swooping balls coming from round the corner which were difficult to get away until the batsmen began to read him.

The score rattled ahead. At twenty overs, drinks were offered and the City now totalled 88 for five. When play resumed Chris Cowie came on to bowl, but Vinay then claimed one of the destructive batsmen - Trehan, on 51 – and shortly after Armstrong, caught in the deep by Kris Cartledge on 35.

DCSCC were now on top. Chris bowled one batsman and then Steve came back on to hit the stumps of another. Nine men down for 117 in 28 overs. A last piece of resistance remained until five overs later Nigel forced a catch for Ian to snaffle and it was all over. City had reached 127 all out in the 33rd over.

And so DCSCC enjoyed their 75th anniversary of the club’s founding with a victory over our friendly neighbours, and it was celebrated by cake and champagne provided by kind club members. The occasion was marked by the presentation of a distinguished (if somewhat diminutive) trophy and thanks were expressed to all who organised the game. Support from onlookers, friends and partners was much appreciated by all who took to the field and an entertaining and memorable day was had by all. Here’s to the 76th next year!