**King’s School Old Boys vs DCSCC, Tynemouth 23 July 2024**

The journey from Durham across the Tyne to Kings School during rush hour was easier than anticipated – most of the team arrived all within five minutes of each other with one exception (*not* Nigel!). Ian Black of KSOB, as always, was waiting for us to lock our motors away in the school quadrangle. Then it was off to the cricket ground at Prior’s Park, where visitors could see it has had something of a face lift: there is now a stout wooden fence all the way round the pitch, presumably installed to prevent the loss of cricket balls over the boundary (really?).

The wicket was green, and well-chewed-up by passing cricket balls; the outfield was lush and much in need of a close shave. After having had a look at these conditions, Guy won the toss and elected to bat; he and Vinay opening.

Ian Black opened the bowling for KSOB – he, as always, sending down frustrating deliveries on length and line and difficult to get away. Two singles off his first over. It made for a slow start for Durham.

The second opening bowler was easier to hit so, as any regular observer of DCSCC’s performance would expect, after a few dots Guy played elegantly forward and knocked a single, putting Vinay on strike and, also as expected, Vinay resolved to test the new fence by driving over the bowler’s head into the long grass. After a couple of shots fell just short and died, Vinay eventually smacked it to the boundary, gaining a four. So the pattern was thus established by both Guy and Vinay – each trying to beat the outfield and running for singles and twos when repeatedly foiled by the surrounding jungle. Five overs in, however, Vinay hoisted a four, then another, then a six, then going for another big hit he mistimed it and served up a dolly catch – leaving the field on 29.

Amitabh came late, claiming it was difficult to park (is he trying to steal Nigel’s reputation?) and he arrived at the ground just in time to get changed. He duly took to the crease as No. 3, only to find, as had the others, it was a difficult wicket to get a start on. He exchanged a number of singles with Guy, until the tenth over - bang! - he swept the ball to the leg side boundary for a four. Excellent! He then tried again… and was bowled.

Ashish was next in. More singles with Guy, then – bang! – a six. Then – bigger bang – a bigger six - this time, over the fence guarding Prior’s Terrace, thus losing the opposition’s ball. Pause for frantic search and resort to the changing rooms for another ball, then it was back to blasting more boundaries until, much to KSOB|’s relief, Ashish eventually retired on 30, being replaced by Rich Root; DCSCC meanwhile passing 100.

Rich unfortunately perished soon after, being caught with five to his name and then Pat came in to take guard. Continuing as before, it meant singles, and a lot of running. Guy finished breathless, running three to retire on 30, bringing in Eckart with two overs to go.

Pat had not faced much so far, only a single, a couple of dots, that was all, and your correspondent was waiting to see how long this would go on. Not long. With the next delivery came a trademark sweep of the bat and Pat hoiked the ball over his shoulder into the neighbouring tennis court. Six! Eckart was not so successful. He managed a single before being caught at square leg. Joanne replaced him but, with twenty overs up, there was no further score, so Pat and Joanne finished by bringing Durham to a total of 122 for 4.

Your chairman correspondent opened the attack against Kings with what can only be described as a rubbish line and length but, as the saying goes, rubbish gets wickets. And so, despite hitting the boundary, the opening bat sliced the ball to Vinay in the gully. After one over, KSOB were 11 for 1

Ashish opened the bowling from the other end and conceded only 3 – a much tighter line, albeit with no wicket. With this example, yours truly at last found his mojo and thus both Ashish and your correspondent restricted the run rate from thereon, both finishing their allotted three overs for 14 each.

The score book records little incident after this opening. Kings’ batsmen scored single after monotonous single. Nigel proved to be Durham’s answer to Ian Black: slow, bewitching deliveries on line and length, which were difficult to get away. Ian Boothroyd partnered the bowling from the other end, and despite conceding a boundary, all else were dots. Kings’ only scoring batsman, Hamid, slowly accumulated runs and eventually retired on 30 but his replacement, after scoring a single, was bowled by Ian.

Amitabh and Joanne were next to bowl. In her first over, Joanne gained a wicket as the batsman, who up until now had mostly scored singles, tried to hit it long…only to be caught at long-on by Guy with another of his memorable catches.

Amitabh tossed up leg-breaks – with some entertaining variation – but giving little away. Amitabh conceded 13 in his three overs; Joanne only 7 for one wicket – the best bowling performance of the day.

The last two overs of the match were bowled by Ian (17 for 1, off 4) and Rich – whose solitary over he could claim as the best of his career with magnificent leggies that conceded only 3 runs... plus an unsuccessful appeal for LBW (“Owzaaaa-aaaagh!”) that frightened the seagulls from the rooftops.

At the end of play, KSOB had scored 74 for 3 in all – way short of the DCSCC’s winning total (and, believe-it-or-not, their ex-captain, Fred, was really quite well-behaved throughout!)

The Durham men, and woman, duly celebrated in the Corner House on their victorious way home. Well done everyone!