**DCSCC vs Knights, South Hetton, 13 Aug 2024**

South Hetton Cricket Club is a half-hour’s drive east of Durham. The ground is well-maintained, the wicket firm and it was chosen to be the venue for the third and deciding encounter with Knights. But it was wet. The day had started bright and sunny but as soon as the hour came to leave Durham and drive to the ground so dark clouds lowered and steady drizzle began. Oh dear!

‘It’s only a passing shower’ some claimed. Huh! The weather forecast said differently. Given the conditions, and the fact that daylight was getting shorter, it was decided to play eighteen overs; co-captain Guy won the toss and opted to bat.

The first over was not too threatening – Guy scored two on the first ball and the bowler subsequently conceded three and a couple of wides. The second over was very different – Sid was bowled first ball, chopping an in-swinging delivery onto his leg stump. Ouch! Who’d be an opening batsman? Dark skies; steady rain; no time to get your eye in and the ball coming off a greasy, unfamiliar wicket.

Ashish came out as number three and took it cautiously for the rest of the over. That was the strategy until both batsmen could get a grip on the conditions, then Ashish swept for the first boundary, and swept again; Guy meanwhile played it straight, driving for four as the bowling changed. The two batsmen now steadily accumulated runs, despite the accumulating rainfall. Ashish smacked a glorious six over the bowler’s head to clear the distant whiteboards and shortly after had to retire on 30. Pat replaced him.

Nine overs down, halfway through the innings and DCSCC were on 57 for 1. Guy was into his stride now and scoring a success of singles, twos and threes (a long boundary). However, a new bowler, Gample, was to cause problems: Pat was out LBW after notching up a number of twos; Chris Cowie was bowled after a couple of singles; and Poppy (her first game for us) was bowled without scoring. Guy retired now on 30 and by the end of the 14th over we were 76 for 4.

Peter B and Eckart were facing and determined to push on. Peter smacked a couple of boundaries before Gample bowled him too, and then, with three overs left, it took Theo and Eckart to play the game out, Eckart hitting a four on the last delivery. DCSCC finished with 105 for 5.

The rain was lighter now but the ground well and truly sodden when DCSCC took to the field. Your chairman and Theo opened the bowling, keeping it tight. Al Clarke (ex-DCSCC) was bowled by Theo by one that kept low but otherwise the wicket still had a bit of bounce (all credit to South Hetton C.C.) and both bowlers could still extract a little lift. This was evidenced when Theo had batsman No. 3 feather one into Eckart’s gloves.

Knights are not known for timid batting however. Nor were they slow in running. There was much swinging of the willow and scampering between the stumps as singles and boundaries were accumulated. Ashish and Ian came on to bowl as the score steadily advanced - aided, it must be said, by some rather generous calling of wides - but no further wickets were taken. Next to attack were Joanne and Chris, and still the runs kept coming. Chris bowled Knights’ Gample in his second over, but the runs were costly: after 16 overs the score was 100. With a target of 6 runs to win and two overs left it was not just the skies that were gloomy. The outlook was dreary for DCSCC. The only bright spark was that ‘Bash’ Bradley had to retire having reached 31 after scoring his last boundary off Chris. Lower order batsmen were to face.

Guy brought Theo back to bowl the penultimate over. A single conceded. Another. Then dot, dot, dot, and a single. Slow torture: three runs for Knights to win in the last over. Chris to bowl.

No more wides, please! (Umpires behave!)

(It must be recorded that at this final stage of the proceedings in a tense contest, the Knights decision-making - and their scorekeeping in the book – is somewhat questionable! What follows is the best representation of the final over)

First ball, Chris sends a flier down. Blocked! The batsman runs for a quick single – Bang: collision with bowler! The batsman is run out!

No - that is unfair. No run, but no run out. Call it a dot ball.

Chris bowls again. A single!

Third ball, another rocket blocked. The batsman runs… but this time he *is* run out!

Knights discussion: at which end is the batsman to be replaced? Confusion reigns.

Fourth ball down. Dot!

The score is 104, the batsman facing is desperate to get a single…he blocks the fifth ball…they run…another run out!

Still two runs short of victory and the temperature is soaring. Last ball. Chris bowls another flier, another suicidal run, *another* run out!

Knights have lost; Durham win! Amazing!

Elation for DCSCC; Despair for Knights. Exhaustion all round.

The light by now is dark for one side, but lighter for the other. Congratulations to all, nonetheless, for the tightest of tight contests, and commiserations for those who feel hard done by, trying to bat it out in the most trying of conditions.

Finally, special mention should go for those who turned up to support us – Raj – and for those who did not bat nor bowl – Aidan. Special mention also for Vinay who arranged the fixture on a neutral ground.