**Kimblesworth CC vs DCSCC, 2 August 2024**

Kimblesworth is a small hamlet, just north of Durham, nothing much more than a few houses and a small, neat cricket pitch. It resides a little before and on the other side of the A167 from the Emirates Stadium, Chester-le-Street, home of Durham County and occasional Test Matches. The pitch is well-maintained - firm wicket, fast outfield, albeit with a sprinkling of rabbit droppings - although the dingy changing facilities are much in need of some tlc. One of the opposition who came out to greet us was complimented by your correspondent on the appearance of the ground…but beware of any apparent locals who reply in an Australian accent. It was an ominous sign.

Kimblesworth opted to open the batting and we saw from the first ball how the opposition were to approach this match. Like the Test series, it was Bazball from the outset (though it must be said the boundaries were much closer!) First ball (from your chairman) was hoisted high to long off and (oops) dropped; second ball, pulled to the boundary; third ball six to long on; fourth ball dot; fifth ball – going for another biggie – brilliantly stumped by glovesman Sid. Change of batsman; dot; then first over complete with 11 for 1. Phew!

Terry opened the bowling the other end. Big hitting continued – a couple of boundaries and then caught by Vinay at deep extra. This was reckless but impressive stroke play. What were these batsmen on? Steroids? Another batsman in – a left-hander – but he was another trying to lash out.

Third over, a single, a dot and then the left-hander was bowled by yours truly (the weather had now turned humid, overcast and the ball was swinging) Next man in: the Australian who opted to bat one handed (!)

[At this stage of the proceedings, after three men down, it must be mentioned that the opposition recorded little of what subsequently followed: the score book gives little mention of who did what in the field. Runs scored by the Kimblesworth batting line-up are recorded but who bowled, who caught, and the manner of how wickets fell, is all ignored.]

The one-handed Australian continued to try and smack everything out of the park. I don’t believe he, or his partner, hit much off Terry’s second over, (albeit byes flying to the boundary) but he gained a six and a four off your correspondent before being caught by Vinay going for another audacious hoist.

The big-bash pattern continued as our bowlers changed to Hilal and Max. No matter what we threw at them - including a variety of full-length deliveries, full tosses and no-balls – they went for everything. One batsman – B Scott – retired on 30+ with five fours, a six and a succession of twos. By my recall (the scorebook shows nothing) by the time we were ten overs down, we had conceded 90 runs scored!

By the thirteenth over, we had knocked over eight wickets. Max had already got one batsman by a shorter pitched delivery which he spooned up for a catch; he hit the stumps of another, and then I believe it was in his fourth and final over he had a third man who gloved the ball to keeper Sid and gained a fourth to another catch. (Max and Phil will likely have a better memory than I or the scorebook!)

Guy and Keerthi came on to bowl. Guy had one man caught (I believe!) and Keerthi went for a couple of sixes and then bowled the last man concerned. To remove this last offender’s middle stump was an excellent come-back which emphasised yet again the nature of the opposition’s mad-cap batting. They were all out for 126 in 15 overs (B Scott who retired on 30 did not return.) Extras (if they can be trusted) totalled 24 (16 byes; 4 leg-byes; 3 no-balls and one wide.)

It was remarked in the interval that we were chasing a gettable target. True. This was said before our openers took to the field. Before we saw what these Australian coached, Bazball maniacs could do in the field.

Guy played his customary cautious start against the deceptive spin of the Australian one-hander: a couple of dots and then a single. Vinay then faced – and was promptly bowled. Oh dear! To lose our master-blaster for a golden duck was an ominous indicator at what was to come.

Sid was next in. More dots, as the opposition dived, swooped and ran about in the field cutting out all our scoring shots. Sid drove to the off, point picked up and threw it at the stumps and the umpire (theirs!) said: *out!* We were two down for one run in the third over.

Pat came in. He scored a single against the attentive field before attempting to pull an inswinger that removed his off stump. Three down. Raj next to face. He went LBW without scoring to the same bowler. Four down. Phill replaced him

Guy was meanwhile scoring the occasional single, unable to reach the boundary past the panthers that surrounded him. Phill hit two, then the Australian unfairly sent down a faster one which bowled him. Five down. All our big hitters were being toppled!

The bowlers changed, Peter was next in but, after a single, out - bowled! Max came in to join Guy – the only one so far to resist the Kimblesworth attack. And so at last we found a partnership: Max picking off the occasional single and changing the strike; Guy now into his stride and hitting boundaries.

Slowly DCSCC advanced the score. In ten overs we were 14 for 6. In eighteen overs, when Max was finally bowled for 10, we had amassed 50 for 6. Guy retired then on 30 so it was time for the next batting collapse: we lost Terry LBW for 0 in the 19th over. And finally Hilal finished on two not out; Keerthi on zero, despite trying to run himself out.

DCSCC scored the grand total of 54 for eight in 20 overs. Not our worst performance by a long way but especial thanks to Guy for not yielding to an unexpectedly efficient attack and making it even more embarrassing for the rest of us than it was. We shall return. (And hopefully do better next time!)