**Stamfordham CC vs DCSCC**, 23 April 2025

Stamfordham cricket ground supports a flat, well-maintained wicket some eight miles and twenty Z bends north along a minor road from Corbridge, Northumberland. (Aidan and I counted every curve on the route!) For the first game of the season, the weather was cold, overcast but dry and – remarkable as it sounds – Nigel arrived on time (!) with the rest of the team for a twenty-over game at a 5.30pm start.

Guy lost the toss and DCSCC were put in to bat – Guy and Tom Huxtable, on debut, taking to the crease. The Stamfordham openers were fast and accurate and it took a number of dots before our men settled in. Ouch! A fast, rising ball at the end of the second over took an edge and first slip did well to hold on to it…that brought the rare sight of Guy having to trudge off with only two runs to his name. Laurie Robson, our second debutant, replaced him.

The opening pacemen did not slacken but after a few more dots Tom and Laurie got the measure of them both. Our batsmen each scored boundaries to begin their first outing with DCSCC. Smart drive was followed by smart drive was followed by arial pulls and yet more smart drives. Six overs down and Durham were on 38 when the first bowling change came. Not that it did them any good – our tigers kept up the charge until Tom pulled a six, drove a four and then retired on 32. This was shortly followed by Laurie, surviving a close LBW shout, to retire also on 30. Vinay and Will Hall (the third new man to bat for us) were now facing.

The runs kept coming. Despite some very athletic fielding, Will battered his way to another maximum – finishing on 30 – and Vinay was only prevented from adding to his 23 by hoisting an impossible, swirling catch over point which the fielder actually span round and caught!

By now we were sixteen overs into the game, with 121 for the loss of two wickets. It was looking good. Ashish came in, clipped a fine, fast shot to gully only to see it caught. Damn!

Phil Nathan and Theo were on strike and giving nothing away, until Phil called for a quick single and was not quick enough. Or rather, Phil insists he was quick enough, although umpire Guy disagreed. Aidan replaced him.

Aidan scored two runs before he was bowled and, with two overs to go, Nigel trooped out to take strike. A number of singles were run, Theo pulled two and in the last ball of the match he was caught going for another hoik into the distance. He finished on six, Nigel not out on two. DCSCC finished with an excellent and challenging 136 for 6.

Would Stamfordham come close? Your chairman correspondent opened the bowling, paired with Theo, and it must be said that the opposition found it difficult to score. It became even more difficult when the Stamfordham opener elected to lift his bat to one of Theo’s rockets which he thought was too high, except it wasn’t. The bails lifted instead. After six overs, Stamfordham had reached 19 for the loss of one, exactly half of the Durham score at this stage. Your chairman was replaced by Ashish who fired down what can only be described as fast spinners. The run rate picked up a little, but not impressively so as our bowling, fielding and especially ‘keeper Laurie kept it tight.

And then Nigel came on to bowl at the other end. What is it that so discombobulates the batsman? Is it the ambling run up? The slow looping deliveries? Or just Nigel’s inimitable style? Whatever – the bold gladiator can attack one ball and then be left floundering like a wounded wildebeest by the next. The swordsmith will be licking his lips at one delivery and then be left crestfallen at missing a dolly. Runs came in dribs and drabs, no wickets fell, but the most notable feature – voted the ‘champagne moment’ – was a skier which soared above Guy at long on who promptly signalled a six rather than attempt to stop it. Despite this, still Durham’s total looked a long way out of reach.

Phil Nathan came on to replace Ashish. He considered it was time to offer the opposition some hope with a few byes and wides. Maybe he thought Nigel at long leg needed the exercise? Certainly, Aidan did not – he impressed galloping around like an antelope deep on the boundary collecting and returning anything that came his way. In his fourth and last over, Phil claimed a wicket, clean bowled, before Ashish and Guy came in to finish off the attack. In the final overs, Stamfordham tried their hardest to reduce the deficit but it was too little, too late and they eventually finished well short with 115 for 2.

So DCSCC triumphed in their first outing of 2025. Special thanks go to our three debutants who each retired on maximums and between them almost put Durham staff out of reach of our hosts, who are a competent and well-drilled side. Mention must be made also of the support provided by Joanne and co-captain Pat who turned up to cheer us on. They will be rewarded by turning out for us in the next fixture. May the weather remain dry if not actually sunny and that we progress from here to more and even greater victories as the season develops. Well done, everyone.

Guy

Tom Huxtuble

Laurie Robson

Vinay

Will Hall

Ashish

Phil Nathan

Theo

Aidan

Nigel

TC