

## SNAP, CRACKLE, MANKAD

By LIONEL B. WICKET

Thursday at MC1. The skies grey, the stakes high. With the Stephenson fixture cancelled, promotion was within reach — one final hurdle, a rag-tag Josephine Butler outfit with more flair than form. Win, and the staff would be victorious. Lose, and face the eternal shame of being bested by a team still unsure how to wear pads correctly.

The Toss Gods continued to smile, bringing DCSCC to a miraculous 8 in a row. In a shock departure from our traditional tactics, Guy (c) chose to bat first in the fading light. A 15-over game was agreed. Short, sharp, definitive?

Whilst the opening bowler took their mark, the natural call of the scorer was heard, "BOWLER'S NAME?". "Kellogg!" came the cry — whether surname or cereal tribute, no one could be sure — but Will and Tom, were ready to snap, crackle and pop (much like Pat's spine).

From ball one, the batters sizzled. Singles, twos, and regular thumps to the rope — 26 runs came from the first two overs alone (though one unnamed bowler retrospectively declared this "conservative"). Tom soon unleashed a barrage of sixes, bringing DCSCC to 58-0 off four overs. Then, with one final mighty blow, he fell for an electric 28 off just 10 balls.

Enter Guy Paxman (c). A busy two and a graceful four got him going, but

the bowling — unconventional at best — demanded a cool head. DCSCC found themselves 90-1 off seven overs, and with Jo-Bo visibly flustered, let their sportsmanship slip.

The infamous Mankad was attempted — Guy (c), at the non-striker's end, was the target. But after some stern "advice" from the umpire and a reluctant withdrawal of the appeal, justice prevailed and Guy (c) played on.

At the other end, Will marched on. Ten fours later, and possibly through sheer guilt, he retired on a scintillating 54. Ashish arrived and wasted no time finding gaps and picking off runs.

By over 14, DCSCC were 150-1. The final over brought late drama — Guy (c), in a noble effort to accelerate, was caught for 39. Kris was run out in the scramble, and Ashish closed unbeaten on a classy 23\*. DCSCC had laid down the gauntlet: 154-3 from 15 overs.

The break came and with it a rousing team talk. Guy (c) delivered a stirring oration, calling for decisive bowling. Unfortunately, in a scene similar to the sermon on the mount in Monty Python's historical documentary "Life Of Brian", Theo misheard this as a call for "declaration bowling" and opened with an over that found every extremity of MC1. If Jo-Bo continued at the impressive 18-an-over rate, the target would be no problem.

Rajat, mercifully, brought a dose of precision from the forest end. A tidy 0-8 over set a calmer tone. Theo regained

some discipline in his second and then came the breakthrough — Rajat induced a loose shot, and Tom took the catch. 32-1.

Ash replaced Theo and instantly struck gold, with a beauty that Guy (c) plucked from the air. Rajat finished his spell with another over of pacy good-length keeping the batters on their toes.

At 42-2 after seven overs, the chase began to slip away.

Ben entered the fray to deliver an exceptional spell. Starting with two dots he then rearranged the stumps of batter number four, spirits were lifting. His second over: a maiden. He conceded one in his third to finish on 1-2 off three overs.

Then came Nigel — the North East's premier spinner and outspoken coin-toss sceptic. He asked questions that Jo-Bo did not have the answers for, with alert fielding he conceded just a handful of singles and occasional twos to deliver 0-13 off three overs.

Tom came to bowl his first over for DCSCC and snared a rare LBW from the umpire! Pat closed things out with a burst of genuine pace that would likely trouble his physical well-being for 4-5 business days. Jo-Bo crawled to 70-5, well short of the target, and thoroughly outplayed.

A thumping victory for DCSCC, and with it, PROMOTION SECURED.

Thanks as always to Eckart for scoring and Jemima & Joanne for support -Viva la Promotion!