

LAST OF THE SUMMER

TYNE(MOUTH)

By LIONEL B. WICKET

The absence of both first and second-choice captains might have left DCSCC adrift. Guy (c) and Joanne had embarked on a patriotic pilgrimage with the stated aim of ensuring no roundabout or lamp-post remained unpainted by a St George's flag, while Pat's reason for absence was, according to sources, far too bizarre and entertaining to be improved upon by even the wildest journalistic spin.

Stepping up to guide the good ship DCSCC out of a mild winless streak was Vice-Captain Ian Boothroyd. The venue: Tynemouth. The conditions: warm sunshine, a slow and sloping outfield that made boundaries feel like a rare commodity.

KSOB won the toss and elected to field, and so Vinay and Ash strode out to face an unexpectedly familiar sight – Nigel Metcalfe, opening the bowling for the opposition. His line was impeccable, his length disciplined, and he was almost rewarded immediately, finding Vinay's edge only for Fred to spill the catch. A let-off of potentially match-defining significance.

The early overs were a test of patience, both batters nudging and nudling runs where possible, but the scoreboard crept forward with more caution than confidence. After ten overs of graft DCSCC sat at 25-0, Nigel returning miserly figures of 0-12 from five (one close source says the current DCSCC openers are worried about their positions).

The first bowling change brought fresh threat. A genuine KSOB bowler charged in from one end while Keerthi – another familiar figure – took the other. The effect was immediate. Vinay began to accelerate, striking through cover and mid-wicket, but after a few overs Keerthi produced a classic dismissal, bowling him for

46. A fine innings given the conditions!

Raj joined Ash, who was playing with composure and intent, threading singles and sweeping well. But just as momentum built, Ash departed, caught for 39. By the 23rd over the score was 92-2, but Raj soon followed, caught off Keerthi to leave DCSCC on 92-3 and in need of a rebuild.

Peter Barrett and Rich Root began to steady things, both finding the boundary and running hard. Rich, keen to start his captaincy-coup, was caught behind for 11 attempting to force the pace. Nigel came back and struck for KSOB, this time removing Phil Nathan with a well-held catch from the KSOB outfield. At 112-5 after 31 overs, it looked as though DCSCC might struggle to post a competitive total.

Enter Junaid, who played with intent and aggression, carving boundaries and working singles to move the scoreboard along. Peter was dismissed after a promising start, bringing Sean to the crease, and together the pair eked out vital late runs. Junaid fell to the final ball for a sprightly 20, leaving DCSCC at 143-7 from their 35 overs. Sean finished unbeaten on 5*, a useful knock in the circumstances.

After a tea that was heavy on carbs but light on Nigel's praise for Aberdeen's tourist industry, DCSCC took the field knowing the score was defensible, but only with sharp bowling and faultless fielding.

Junaid opened from the downhill pavilion end with pace and precision, Theo taking the other end and striking in his very first over – clean bowled and DCSCC had their breakthrough. Junaid, probing around the wicket, delivered some beauties that were unlucky to not be rewarded. Theo removed their number 3 for 5 and after eight overs KSOB were 31-2.

Phil Nathan, ever the commentator, noted, "we've had quite a few byes" (Ed. – three), sparking what could only be described as a 'keeper's awakening' in Rich,

who would go on to produce a superb performance behind the stumps.

Sean and Ben bowled the next phase. Both started nervously but soon found rhythm, Sean taking a crucial wicket when Ian (c) pouched a high swirling catch at mid-on. After 15 overs KSOB were already 89-2, but that third wicket tightened things up.

Ash and Ian bowled in tandem, each conceding only 15 runs from their five overs. Ian produced a wicket-maiden, finding an edge that Rich pocketed sharply. Fielding standards remained high throughout, Peter flinging himself around the infield, while Raj covered acres on the rope. After 26 overs KSOB were 117-4, needing 27 off the last nine.

Phil and Vinay came on for the final push. Vinay removed Keerthi courtesy of a tidy catch from Ben, and Phil produced a peach to bowl Nigel – poetic symmetry for his earlier batting cameo. With three overs to go KSOB required 15 runs. The bowling remained disciplined, but a pair of crisp boundaries in the penultimate over brought the scores level. The first ball of Phil's final over found a thick top edge which skipped over the keeper and trickled to the boundary. A strong delivery but you can't account for flukes. Game over - KSOB 147-6, winning by with five balls to spare.

Despite defeat, DCSCC produced a performance full of grit and skill. Vinay and Ash set the tone with the bat, Ian led from the front with the ball, and Rich impressed behind the stumps and helped enormously setting the field. Everyone worked hard in the field and Ian did incredibly well to keep us in the game at crucial times. A huge thank you must also be extended to Nigel and Keerthi who both sacrificed their opportunity to paint flags with Guy (c) in order to let us get a game on.

There is still cricket left in the season, and on this evidence, there is still plenty of fight left in DCSCC.