

2018 Season A Division Devon League

V BRIXHAM at Home 9th June

It would take a hardened cricketer not to watch this game and get caught up in the huge excitement, ups and downs, and finally bitter disappointment of this thrill a minute game.

At various times during the match I was considering the poem 'IF', by the famous Victorian – Rudyard Kipling, Then for some reason 'That old Magic' (A song made famous by, amongst others Judy Garland and Frank Sinatra) and final 'the coat of varnish' oft referred to by Geoffrey Boycott.

So, a beautiful day at the Ho!, with occasional burst of stronger wind and cloud making the score box chilly some of the time and oven like at others (the air conditioning still hasn't arrived). Brixham nestling below us in the table, lost the toss and Paul Heard, mindful no doubt of the two games we had tried to chase down a victory – particularly at Budleigh the week before, opted to bat.

As usual James Ford and Tom Brend opened up and put up a respectable start of 43, James F giving as smart ct and b to the off spinner. Ollie Hannam did not look like he was in form but put on another 44 with Tom. However at 87, with Tom 47 he was given LBW. Popular view in the score box was that he was unfortunate – we agreed that a Hawk eye view would probably show it going over, but there we are. Even more unfortunately Ollie was out at the same score, and what has been becoming something of a concern – the certain frailties of our middle order was to be exposed.. If I described James F as 'the Rock' (for the avoidance of doubt not the American actor/wrestler of that name but a piece of stone!) then in this context Paul H gives the appearance in his batting of a piece of granite, with that large left pad plonked down the pitch there is a definite 'thou shalt not pass' in his appearance. In times of difficulty and strife he is there. And so it was today, Paul put together after some strong defensive work in a fine 50 with four 4s and four 6s in 51 balls. If only....but I will come to that in a minute. Alex H came in and made a pleasant 14 before lifting one for a fairly simple catch. Jack Ford looked good but was run out, and Jamie Lathwell was soon gone. Fred King hit a nice 14 with one four and one six – but therein lies the rub 16 runs between nos 5, 6 7 & 8. All have potential to score many more. Josh Atkinson Martin Stewart and Cameron Atkinson stayed around for few minutes to post a final score of 201 all out, but with nearly 6 overs unused. Therein lies another problem. If only....but again we will come to that.

Opinion seemed divided as to whether it was a catchable score, but popular opinion seemed to believe another 20 was really needed.

After another fine tea refreshed everyone and off we went for the reply.

Paul Heard and Fred King got little respect from the Brixham openers, Pugh in particular smashing Fred for 20 in his first 2. Paul H unusually also suffered, and after 6 overs Jamie L was brought into the attack. He bowled 4 very tight overs for 13 and was unlucky that the times the ball passed the edge, no-one was good enough to touch it. Josh Atkinson replaced Paul and immediately got the other opener LBW.

However with Brixham at 155-4 the match was as good as theirs. Martin Stewart had got (one for 24) and Jack Ford another 2 (for 36) . Paul Heard ran out their number 5 who looked well set to see them home. At this time I was thinking to myself what If Tom's LBW had gone the other way what if one of their batsman who was given not out and went on to score 20 and who was – by Brixham's chairman opinion– stone dead LBW first ball – well, what if, but one cannot go down that avenue.

So with the game slipping away rather faster than we would have liked, Paul decided to bring on the rock – JF. I was immediately reminded of a match at Ottery some years ago (3 or 4 perhaps) when we were in a desperate plight and on came the rock to mesmerise the batsman out.. In 8 overs James got four befuddled batsman out one a stunning catch at mid-off.- some may think that some sort ofmagic cast a spell on the batsman

Cameron Atkinson had been operating at the top end with great credit 8 overs for 30 - highly commendable. But with one over to go 3 runs needed, captain Paul took responsibility – quite right, and the cards fell that with two balls to go, the scores were level, one wicket to fall and (obviously) a tie or either side winning still on the cards.

Paul bowled the penultimate ball. It was hit fairly smartly to mid on. The fielder picked it up threw at the stumps from square on and with the batsman a yard and half out of his ground the ball hit the stump but the bail refused to be dislodged. Oh for one more coat and varnish (the Boycott reference – remember) and we would have been home (but not necessarily dry).

What a game. Emotions flowed back and forward apart from the halfway point in their innings no side looked certain to pull it off. A wonderful advertisement for the game, but at the end of the day if only.....

Next week another home match against Abbotskerswell – who are probably a better outfit than Brixham so some work to be done. The following week I am taking my second weekend off for a little family matter, and then there is Chudleigh and half the season's gone.

We have played some pretty good cricket this year, and some patches not quite so good. The fielding was excellent – I only remember one poor piece of fielding that left a bit to be desired. Lets just put it all together for next week

The Quill