

V Cornwood at Home 25th August

'Almost there' A pop song by Andy Williams circa 1960/70

As I drove home from this pulsating match I did hope that I would be confirming our survival in the A Division for next year, but checking the late results I found that Ivybridge had thrashed Brixham (Boo Hoo!) and as a result certain things are now certain.

First Chudleigh are relegated, that leaves one relegation spot open. Ivybridge are still the favourites for that, and to climb above Bideford and save themselves they have to beat Torquay who themselves need just 2 points to secure promotion whilst Chudleigh restricts us to less than 6. (Brixham are still not clear of relegation themselves – but lets not get too complicated).

So to the matters in hand. After an appalling Friday, Saturday turned out to be a sunny, fresh and breezy day, Cornwood in 3rd place really wanted win as they had a technical chance of promotion, but, as one of their supporters told me 'your boys were up for it, ours weren't'. Indeed, some of the comments I heard suggested that Cornwood only had to turn up and win. Dangerous thoughts.

Cornwood won the toss and put Bideford in. Oh gosh I thought, or actually words to that effect. Pitches this year haven't been as easy to set totals on at the Ho! However out went our new sparkling, art of the century Ton Brend and Ollie Hannam (do their combined ages equal the Old Warhorse (TOW)?). The opening partnerships this year have been probably the greatest strength in the campaign. Last week at Abbots, it was more than 100 yesterday it was only 22 when Tom B was out for 12 – one of his lowest scores of the season. However what TB and OH did was to blunt the fore of the openers and open the way for some later hitters. Jack Ford at 3 was tied down a bit and perished trying to up the scoring rate which brought Alex Hannam in to face his brother. Alex has struggled a bit recently to find his timing. He has all the shots and more but just can't get them away. What he did get away however was his brother who being sent back slipped on the surface and was stranded yards out of his ground. I am not sure that it was AH's fault, more OH's shoes I would think but was a great shame because he was looking good for his 29. This brought TOW to the crease - nominally to give stability to the middle order, but overs were going by. It was the 23rd over when JF came in and there was 49-3 on the board, and things frankly weren't looking too good. However after a few defensive prods JF struck 42 off 53 and brought some stability. Paul Heard came in and went for 9. Fred King arrived and struck 29 off 25 with 3 4s and 2 6s, Josh Atkinson 10 off 5 all combining to a respectable 177 – 9.

Not enough declared the Umpires - would need 220 at least. I wasn't so sure. On pitches like this this year 185 seems almost par, so 170. We would see.

Cornwood opted to drop one of their usual openers to number 11, and opened with the other usual and a pinch hitter. Said pinch hitter hit 10 off Paul Heard's first over and I thought that they were going to try to get 50 quickly on the board to take the pressure off. Brixham successfully employed such a tactic and won. However PH is far too canny for that and got him in his second over superbly caught by Cameron A at mid on high above his head. At 22 Paul then bowled Cornwood's young start batsman. Discounting his first over PH bowled the next 9 overs for 14 runs. What pressure that put on. Fred got the other opener who was showing a bit of form caught behind. 50/3. At that stage of the innings we were 22/1 so Cornwood were scoring far more quickly than we had - but they were losing wickets far more quickly.

James Lathwell replaced Fred as usual. JL didn't seem at the start of the season to be in his best form but recently he has hit a rich seam of form his 7 overs (oh for the time when he can bowl 10) cost 20 for 2 wickets, their captain and danger man caught and bowled, and their overseas caught

behind. Their next batsman was run out JL/OH and then Martin Stewart came into play. As usual MS bowled a long hop first ball which went for 6, but spying and opportunity, 4 balls later bowled another which was superbly caught by AH diving forward on the mid wicket boundary. In his 3rd over over he got his next victim again caught behind, their number was quite brilliantly caught by Cameron A on the deep long leg boundary jumping high into the air, while their wicket keeper who briefly looked threatening was bowled by JF - and there it was, all over in 36,5 overs.

This was a very interesting match in many ways, First the few fielding errors which had crept into recent games vanished. It is possible that two very difficult chances went down, but in reality all chances were taken and all balls stopped. Secondly, in many if the marches (Paignton away comes to mind) we would take the first 6 or 7 wickets and then let the tail get away, and finally when the innings slowed down there was enough sense not to lose wickets and then build up the base for the hitters down the order. This was very satisfying. Well done everyone.

Man of the match - well that's an easy one for me - week after week suffering the emotional ups and downs with nothing I can do to help.

So off we go to Chudleigh next week for the final match - where has the summer gone?

7 points will do it, Torquay beating Ivybridge will do it, Brixham getting less than 5 points will do it, but on the form showed yesterday, we can do it on our own.