

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING BENJAMIN

ACT ONE

Scene: The pavilion at the Selangor Turf Club. It is less than artistically and luxuriously furnished. Fans are languorously rotating and the sound of leather on willow can be heard wafting from the adjoining pitch. There is polite applause from assembled cricketers. CHRIS SPEED is arranging his kit and looking the other way as BENJAMIN enters for 30, red-faced and perspiring profusely.

BENJAMIN: Did you watch my innings, young man?

CHRIS: I didn't think it polite to watch, sir.

BENJAMIN: I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play correctly – anyone can play correctly – but I play with wonderful expression and inventive calling and running between the wickets. As far as batting is concerned, innovation is my forte. I keep science for the Beach Club.

CHRIS: Yes, sir. I can see why, sir.

Enter 'KEEPER for 4

'KEEPER: I'd agree with that, old chap. You certainly added to the classical lexicon of running between the wickets: "Wait!"; "Yes!"; "No!" and now "Fuck!" I didn't know if it was an expression of disgust or a request, as you were standing next to me at the time.

BENJAMIN: You were bowled by an absolute pearl of a ball, weren't you old chap?

'KEEPER: Absolutely! So good it belongs on a necklace! Pitched middle and clipped off. Too dashed good for me. Still, you had a good little knock. You didn't seem too rusty after Manila! Plenty of lubrication I imagine?

BENJAMIN: Indeed. But the bowling today was a little quicker than that to which we are normally subjected; although once we saw the Malaysian U-19 opener off there wasn't much to follow and I don't understand quite how we're getting so bogged down in the middle of our innings.

Enter FLOELLA for 15

FLOELLA: Hello, chaps! Don't get up! Ach man! I was just getting going, again, and I played a dog-awful shot down long-on's throat.

BENJAMIN: A weekend's Bunburying in Manila is not the best preparation for batting is it?

Enter PADMA for 1

PADMA: I don't understand how I got out; I don't normally play a slog like that! That's twice in two innings!

BENJAMIN: To lose one's wicket once in that way may be regarded as a misfortune, but to lose it twice seems like carelessness. [*Enter TRAVIS for 0*] Bad luck, young man. You played some nice looking defensive shots out there.

TRAVIS: @%#@ @!&&## pommy &&8%##@!!!

BENJAMIN: Indeed, I couldn't have expressed it better myself! [*Enter GUPINDER for 2*] Oh dear! We seem to be losing wickets without really scoring any runs. In fact, between the eighth and the sixteenth overs we've only scored 22. Never mind. Geoff can help us limp to 100. [*Enter ARVIN for 0*]. Another wicket? This isn't looking so good! If it wasn't for the misfielding we'd have even fewer on the board. [*Enter SPEEDY for 5*]. 103 off 20 overs on this wicket and this outfield. Probably not enough. Oh dear!

Enter GEOFF, unbeaten on 20; and CHRIS STORER, likewise, on 1

Curtain.

ACT TWO

Scene: The middle of the square at Selangor Turf Club. It is hot. There is the sporadic roaring of the crowd watching horse-racing on screens in the stand, alas not the stand for the cricket! The pitch is hard. CHRIS SPEED discovered pacing out his run; GEOFF chuntering at his being assigned non-strike bowler status. CHRIS SPEED bowls well but is not helped by the age of the fielders to whom the ball has been hit in the air. There is much ribald commentary from behind the stumps at the average of this Kelawar side, which looks increasing ragged as the runs tick away. One of the signs of impending decrepitude is the need/desire to stop the ball with one's feet rather than hands and BENJAMIN does so to a ball that was otherwise passing him at knee height. GEOFF huffs and puffs tidily, also to no avail. The introduction of CHRIS STORER brings about the first wicket, beautifully bowling the SOB opener who had long been upsetting the 'KEEPER with his antics. For a moment, the equilibrium of modest stillness and humility is disturbed, but is quickly restored by a stentorian admonition from BENJAMIN. ARVIN bowls quite nicely for much of his short spell but his short balls do get rather spanked. He does pick up one wicket, though, beautifully caught at short midwicket by PADMA who looks no less surprised than his teammates that it sticks. The introduction of SPEEDY helps to bring the game to a speedy conclusion, but not before he claims the third wicket to fall. His over goes for sixteen runs and Kelawar succumbs to its first defeat in 2008. One that may not have happened if the SOB side had also fielded its three Junior players.

On the Kelawar-Lewis scoring system, Kelawar wins by 47 runs.

Curtain.

ACT THREE

Scene: The pavilion at Selangor Turf Club. SPEEDY, BENJAMIN, GUPINDER, CHRIS STORER, CHRIS SPEED, FLOELLA, and 'KEEPER are gathered round the esky talking shit. However, there is one item of interest: an enquiry as to whether this was the oldest side Kelawar has ever fielded – it certainly had that appearance with the quality of the fielding! There were seven players over 40 and not one of them wasn't crocked in some way by the end of the day! Today's team had an average age of 42 – 49 if one excludes the Juniors! And there was a 42 year age gap between the youngest and the oldest.

MATCH SUMMARY KCC 103-7 (20 overs) Benjamin, 30; Geoff, 20*
 SOB 104-3 (16 overs)

LOST by 7 wkts (or WON by 47 runs)