

10AM - Saturday - 09 May - 2009

“What,” said a rather cheerful Benjamin Webb upon cresting the steps of STC’s pavilion, “ho.”

The aforementioned gentleman’s sunny disposition was not to be questioned as, rather oddly, the expanse of heaven’s blue window had neglected to provide the usual grey blur of warning. Usually downwind and closing fast, the threat of rain was a no-show, much like one of the team’s youth team call-ups! No setback is too great and so with diplomatic tongue in hand; Captain Geriatrix meandered across to the oppo and had a quick word. A compromise was reached, and it was agreed that Kelawar would take the field with three rather than the previously agreed upon four juniors, and would turn a blind eye to the fact that the opposition would field just two. Malaysia, as they say in these parts, boleh.

And so the Club Captain, the Most Eligible Bachelor, Ben Webb was asked to take the field. Take the field he did, resplendent in a pair of shorts that caused Captain Geriatrix to cast fond thoughts back to days of yore when schoolboys attired themselves similarly when tasked with an innings or two in the sun. C.G’s soon-to-be-erstwhile son, your kindly author, inquired as to whether the year in question was 1942, and got immediately shunted down the batting order into the realm of the dreaded DNB’s.

“Bowl first,” had been the advice given to C.G. by his heir, who’d prodded the greenish pitch and felt moisture on his thumb. This advice had been followed upon the coin landing right side up, but that initial advice had been slightly ill-thought out. Not two yards away from the spot that had been prodded was a wetter, slicker, far juicier patch of wicket. This, however, was not situated on a good length. Not even short of a length. The exact area in question was bounded by white lines, also called the crease, popping crease, etc.

Needless to say, the downwind first over and the third not long afterward from the long-haired one, failing even to control his stock late in-swing, gifted the opposition* with more runs than they truly deserved. Fortunately, the deceptively youthful - or youthfully deceptive - left arm of Andrew Daniels kept a lid on things with short-of-a-length snorter after short-of-a-length snorter, one of which was misjudged in the deep off a top edge by the truly youthful Matthew, not even the juniorest of the day’s juniors at a beastly eleven years of age. Oh, to be a carefree lad again, sayeth I. And for the company of so many other like-aged lads, sayeth Paeda.

**They shall be referred to as the ‘Oppo’ consistently as, even in possession of the scorebook, your author fails to divine the name of their team, organization or what’s-it.*

It was a strange pitch for us denizens of Kuala Lumpur of a quicker bent in the bowling department, and Mr. Daniels enjoyed the bounce, bowling a consistent and rather unfortunate spell of 0-22 of four, as the batsmen, previously mentioned miss aside, placed several mishits in the vacant midwicket area. Considering that the mean age of the field segment between square leg and mid-on was in the mid-fifties in any case, perhaps those shots could have been described as cultured dinks. Had one of the batsmen’s names been Tattersfield, the description would have been immediate, vociferous and quite gleeful. But, I digress.

C.G, also called Storer Senior in case you haven't figured that one out yet, brought himself on for an eclectic trundle, his first over going for just five and his second – and, naturally, last – receiving a considerable amount of disrespect, which may be assigned a numerical value of nineteen. 0-24 of 2, there. To get battered and then bring on the right bowler, however, is the mark of a true captain and such was the case when the ball was tossed to Rohit.

It must, however, be noted that one does not simply toss the ball to Rohit. Rohit is one of those chaps that simply epitomizes the word 'cricketer' as he manages to claim quiet adequacy in all disciplines of the game and then proceeds to hit your previous definition of 'classy' for a proverbial six. Even his defensive shots are so crisply middled that they can be heard from the car park, causing even the most uninterested WAG to go, 'Oo did wot?' upon diverting her attention from the all-important task of painting her fingernails the same colour as her handbag. And so it is with the little genius' bowling, although it strays a little from the perfectionistic sadism of his batting.

(Actually, this report is going on long enough, and I'm just being complimentary to Rohit because he went to my uni. Let's move along here, noting that he bowls decent leggies and took 3-24 on the day. Tally ho, then.)

The score, hitherto ticking onwards and upwards with monotonous regularity, was slowed desperately by the rapid fall of wickets and the behemoth of their burgeoning total ground to a stammering halt much like United's 'quadruple winning season' will starting from this weekend onwards. Yes, I had to get that one in there. Liverpool for the title!

Numbers one, two and three fell for a pair of mid-thirties and a quarter-century respectively, and thus it was time to turn to the untested. Mehul got the next bowl, all thirteen years of him, and managed a fine time of it – the youngster finished with figures of 1-18 off two, many of those runs coming in wides. In truth, he looked dangerous whenever he put the ball straight, and ought to have been a little bit more fortunate in regards to the elevation of the umpire's finger on the many occasions the little round red thing hit the strappy thing on the batsman's leg right in front of the pointy wooden sticky things in the ground.

Sami was next to be introduced, called up after a fine three-wickets-in-one-over haul against a Singaporean touring side not long ago, and struggled slightly into the wind, going for a few. Yet again, it was a matter of wide versus straight ball, with very different results being garnered when the modus operandi was switched to the opposite. 0-28 off two, but he certainly didn't deserve those figures.

Tasked with closing out the innings were Matthew and Druvi, and that job was accomplished in fine style. Only fifteen runs were conceded in these last four overs, Matt showing the rest of the team how to bowl by only conceding six singles in his two overs. He produced a rather mature display of cool-headed medium pacers, as he kept a great off-stump line and simply did not give the batsmen anything to attack. The only wide-less spell of the day, with a very well deserved reward with his penultimate delivery: yet another one on a good length on off stump which the batsman attempted to hoick in the general direction of cow. A safe shot, as midwicket was up.

The main problem with this scenario was that a gentleman named Rohit, who may already have garnered passing mention in this thread, was one of the closer spectators to this event, being a mere 40 yards away at deepish mid-on. Demonstrating commendable enthusiasm and a propensity for pace despite not having quite the longest stride, he consumed the distance with ease and, on the stretch, showed the youngsters how it's done by getting both hands around and under the ball. A rather magnificent highlight which will undoubtedly be the catch of the day despite there being a match to follow the one currently under the scope. The general consensus is that none of the contestants involved in that following game have the required level of skill, ability, or any of that jazz to even challenge; although one never knows when Drummond plays against a team of children. Ahem.

A close, then, for the Oppo at 6-159 off their allotted 20 overs. Wicket-takers, apart from a neat run-out worked by Matthew and Capitanus Ancientus, include:

Rohit (4-0-24-3), Mehul (2-0-18-1) and Matt (2-0-6-1)

A not unattainable pipe dream, this eight score total, and the Kelawar batting lineup did not tarry in getting after it. Disaster struck relatively quickly, though, as Matt Larsen followed a few lusty swipes by falling across his wicket and getting hit in the ankle. Up went the finger, and his innings ended on a quickly taken 7.

Ben Webb was at the other end and was heard to mutter less-than-complimentary things about medium pacers and elevating fingers, but was going at an excellent clip. And luckily for him, he wasn't hit on the pads while the medium pacer was umpiring. Unshakeable in defense and unwavering in his resolve when presented with long-hoppish tripe outside off-stump (and juniors sweeping the off-side boundary, I hear Graham Witt say from the recesses of the peanut gallery) Ben proceeded to bludgeon his way along with merry gusto, clearly enjoying the feeling of pad-straps upon his bare calves.

Rohit was given the number three spot and, having already waxed lyrical about his ability with the bat, ball and whites with grass underfoot, it is unnecessary to harp on any further about quite how well he played, aside from saying that the opposition simply could not find a way to breach his defenses. With him and Ben at the crease, the yapping (mostly directed at the two juniors) from the field quieted down and the noises emanating from thence started to resemble a Batman cartoon: Thump! Crash! Bang! And so forth.

The score mounted with every boundary and it looked like the two batsmen weren't going to give the rest of the line-up a look-in but Ben's concentration stuttered eventually and he fell to a tame catch for a well taken 40. Padma was next in and kept the score going with his usual mix of fours and walked singles, but fell quickly for 12.

Andrew Daniels followed, and he decided that he preferred to watch Rohit bat from the middle rather than back in the pavilion, playing the anchor role to perfection while his partner blasted away. The total, which always looked attainable but rather dicey, soon began to loom closer and closer with every boundary. He turned the strike over with every opportunity while playing a few elegant strokes of his own, finishing not out on 16.

The day belongs, however, to Rohit. Topping off a solid outing with the ball and in the field, his unbeaten knock of 66 was the backbone upon which Kelawar based an ultimately comfortable 7-wicket victory with some two overs to spare. So, to the scores:

B. Webb (40), M. Larsen (7), Rohit (66*), Padma (12), A. Daniels (16*), T. Rest (DNB)

And to close off on the right note: Selected footy predictions!

- Everton 0 - 2 Tottenham (*Pavlyuchenko x 2*)
- West Ham 1 - 4 Liverpool (*Noble, Lucas Leiva, Gerrard, Kuyt, Carragher*)
- Arsenal 2 - 1 Chelsea (*Nasri, Deco O.G, Ballack*)
- Newcastle 2 - 3 Middlesborough (*Owen x 2, O'Neil, Wheater, Johnson*)
- Man Utd 1 - 2 Man City (*Tevez, Dunne, Bojinov, INJ: C.Fagnaldo7 - Broken Fingernail*)