

KELAWAR DOES NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT

Sunday, 18th May 2008;
Navaratnam Shield Final vs Silver State;
Selangor Turf Club

*Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of play;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

The hour's drive down from Lembah Beringin was one of foreboding: the sky was clearly well into the final trimester of its pregnancy and waters were breaking all over the place. The experience that is commensurate with old age has taught us that a wet STC is even more of a ground where the toss is vital: it dries quickly but that makes batting easier – if you're doing it second. Turning the corner and rising from the tunnel under the race track revealed an STC pitch that was still under covers. The start was clearly going to be delayed and not, this week, by equine activities. For once, Kelawar's finest made an effort to do some warming-up; although desultorily tossing a rugby ball around can hardly be construed as such. Ask Glenn McGrath. Much sage advice was proffered about what to do, bat or bowl, but that came to naught when Henry, resplendent in his whites (as ordered by Tabs' "Muppet"), lost the toss and was told we were to have first dig. There was much thought-provoking debate as to the batting order (as befitted a game of such import), but the general feeling was that we would need 150 against a Silver State side that had batting talent, but not in depth.

*Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.*

Our old friend Steve Hodges was elected to open the bowling for Negeri Perak, from the "Singapore" end, and he was up against Ben and Henry – the old right-left combo that had done so much damage in games past. The first over was interesting enough with Webby bludgeoning a couple of fours and getting us off and running. However, this good start was not to last. Henry's first ball from Jarod – an innocuous-looking full toss - was blobbed back to the bowler and we were 9-1. Henry's golden duck was to be mentioned, *en passant*, in his own Churchillian oration before we went out to field, "Any of these is capable of a first-baller." Quite. However, Jarod was clearly swinging the ball prodigiously as Flo and Webby groped around, much like the latter in the Beach Club on a particularly late Saturday night: he knew roughly where it was but was confused as to whether he really wanted it. Nonetheless, Flo was able to make hay at the other end as Steve's three overs conceded 23 runs. We were getting the required run rate from one end and sweet bugger all from the other! Webby didn't last much longer as he became the first in a succession of Kelawar batsmen to get rather tamely caught – this time off the boomeranging Jarod. 24-2 became 24-3 soon after as Flo followed in almost identical fashion. Silver State was cock-a-hoop while Kelawar was cocking-it-up.

*Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

At the wicket now, we had Mr Wilson – looking every inch his namesake from Dad’s Army – upright, correct and bristling with intent – the second ball he faced was dispatched for the first six of the day; and young Sam Barton, also upright and correct. However, Sam’s intent was not to come to fruition as he was soon bowled by Asgari for a duck. 34-4 off seven overs. Things were not looking good. Geoff De Zylva was next to make his way to try to repair the damage. In tandem with the Head, he did so and the next five overs or so yielded 30 more precious runs. It was clear that the target of 150 would have to be revised. The Beak hit a six over long-on from the tyro Praveen and tried to repeat the shot next ball, to be bowled. 65-5. Arshad, who has an impressive average in this competition, was next to try to boost Kelawar’s flaccid batting. Some sturdy blows and surprisingly good running between the wickets did not last long as he was the third to be caught lamely. 77-6 The team’s oldest player was next to go in – with the Captain’s hand on his shoulder and the exhortation in his ear, “Get us to 130, Cranners!” (“Fuck that!” Cranners thought, “12 not out and another asterisk for me!”). He was a little surprised to find himself running a constant stream of twos but did not really last long enough to get too flustered by the fact, mistiming a half-volley straight to extra cover. 93-7. Kelvin had not yet batted in this competition but soon proved his mettle: nudging the ball and rotating the strike. He and Geoff managed to get in a lot of running (suitable warming-up for their bowling spells, perhaps?) and the score clicked and crept up to a not unrespectable 129-7 from the allotted 20 overs. Not easy to defend, but not impossible.

The Principal opened the bowling, in tandem with the Student. Both had proved to be a handful in previous games: the former with his late away-swing and the latter with his late in-swing. However, Ranjit and Sivam proved impervious to their wiles and with a mixture of considerable luck and gleeful helping of themselves to the odd half-volley, Silver State was 31-0 from the first five overs. This prompted the skipper to call upon Flo (who had not previously done much bowling in this competition) who sent down a trio of tidy overs. At the expiration of the Principal it was time for Mr Bisto to bring himself on to bowl. But two overs for 18 runs were enough for him to call it a day on his wily (?) left-arm “stuff”. At 72-0 from eleven overs, Silver State was sitting pretty. The introduction of Chris Speed into the attack promptly brought the first wicket, Sivam blocking a ball to mid off for Geoff (who else?) to snaffle comfortably. 75-2 from twelve. At this time, Geoff was called into the attack and things were about to change.

*Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

Chris bowled quite tidily, but his three overs cost 26 runs and there was a need to do something dramatic. Ranjit had batted well and was guiding his side home when he set off for a suicidal run (even against the combined talents of Chris and Geoff). 119-3 from sixteen overs. Something needed to happen. Geoff’s next over was more testing for Muppet as ball after ball rapped on the pads for three, successive, vehement appeals, all-round, to be turned down. The fourth could not be. 120-4 from seventeen. Still more was needed and this came in the form of Kelvin who, to the delight of everybody not connected with Silver State, bowled Asgari with a snorter that sent his middle stump cartwheeling towards the ‘keeper. 125-5 from eighteen overs. Tossing him the ball, the Skipper said, “We just need five wickets from this over, Geoff.!” First ball: single: 126-5, four needed. Second ball. LBW: 126-6. Third ball, bowled – off stump cartwheeling (“Even medium paced doobers can do it,” one sage remarked): 126-7. Hat-trick ball, LBW! 126-8. The

improbable was happening. Young Pasha Ali was not a picture of confidence as he strode to the wicket. Somehow, he kept the fifth ball out. The final ball of the over was a magnificent in-swinging, destined for the middle stump until a thickish inside edge intervened and squirted the ball past a diving and despairing 'keeper for four down to fine leg. Silver State had won, having snatched victory from the jaws of a defeat that had seemed highly unlikely only ten minutes before.

*And you, my father, there on that sad height
Curse, bless me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

This was an incredibly disappointing end to the campaign – we were so near yet so far! Geoff's superb final over nearly won us a match which had looked hopelessly lost only five minutes before. It was a wonderful game of cricket played in wonderful spirit. Blah! Blah! The rest of the day's proceedings was somewhat lost in a fog of Coopers beer and Chivas Regal!

MATCH SUMMARY

KCC 129-7 (20 overs) Geoff de Z, 39*; Graham W, 29

SSCC 130-8 (19 overs) Geoff de Z, 5-20

LOST by 2 wkts