

ISLIP CRICKET CLUB



Perhaps by way of compensation for the 13 fixtures lost to the pandemic, the weather gods have been kind to Oxfordshire cricket. When socially distanced cricket began in July, we had ten fixtures planned, and with eight consecutive weekends of good cricketing weather so far are well into recovering the season – or at least half of it. For the time being we have added an 11th game against Oxford University Hospitals on September 27th. There is a chance that we will add one more game in early October if the weather holds.

First, a correction. The excitement of a fast-moving season proved a little too much for your correspondent who last month muddled his Astons with his Ascotts and his Rowants with his Wychwoods. Our last game in July was against Ascott-under Wychwood not Aston Rowant; it was a win, nonetheless. Putting that aside, we have had some eventful cricket this month.

The (as it turned out on this occasion) aptly named Far From The MCC visited Islip on August 23rd. When they batted first, Ben Crawford and Jack Launchbury bowled economically, keeping the opposition to 29-1 after 11 overs. With one early wicket under his belt, Jack hit a purple patch in his fifth over, taking four wickets in 14 balls to reduce FFTMCC to 35-5 and finishing with 5 wickets for 22 runs from his seven overs. Ben was unlucky not to take a wicket, conceding just 11 runs in his spell. Then it was time for the irrepressible Harry Brock to come on and take two more wickets in his first two overs. A run out and a first ever wicket for 14 year old Shreya Anand followed and the innings petered out, leaving Islip a target of 69. Guest star Andy Oliver (37 no), ably supported by Shreya Anand (18) made batting look easy after David Goodfellow's run of bad luck continued when he fell to yet another stupendous catch, taking Islip to a win by eight wickets.

For the last few years, the August Bank Holiday weekend has been given over to an Islip v Brock's All Stars game. This is a game in which bragging rights (both during and after the game) are at least as important as taking part. Last year the cricketing talent available in the extended Brock family proved too much for Islip's weakened side, but this year, with Joe Thomas called away to play for Oxfordshire's T20 team, it was a different story. Islip batted first and while David Goodfellow's bad luck continued, a fine innings of 60 from Ollie Black supported by Shreya Anand (27) took Islip to 145-7. Neil Brock's side made a valiant attempt to get the runs and opener Tony Launchbury reached 36 in the All Stars total of 92 before becoming one of Shreya Anand's four victims.

With three consecutive victories (including one away at Kempsford), Islip went into their home game with Kempsford feeling confident. But pride comes before a fall, and arguably rarely so much as in this topsy-turvy game. The Islip innings opened badly. Two wickets fell on the first over taking the home side to 2-2 with the hapless David Goodfellow and Ollie Black both failing to trouble the scorers. A fine 23 from Tejas Anand, 30 from Ben Crawford and 27 from Harry Brock steadied the ship before a late collapse. Brian Deeley was bowled for a duck and a 14 year-old wreaked havoc among Islip's veterans sending Stan Nelson and Rick Henshaw back to the pavilion, both lbw playing awful shots, for a paltry total of two runs between them leaving Jack Launchbury high and dry with 13 no and the score on 131.

In reply, Kempsford started slowly. None of Kempsford's first seven batsmen made it past 12 and while the required run rate was under four an over, Kempsford soon fell well behind their target. Their number eight proved less compliant than his predecessors. It was Anthony Axel-

Berg that had taken two wickets in the first over of Islip's innings and now, having started by pushing singles, he moved up through the gears. Kempsford's number 10 also rose to the challenge but with one over to go, thanks in no small measure to an economical six overs from Nigel Mason, Kempsford needed an improbable 21 to win.

Now no one has ever said that captaining Islip's cricket side is easy. It certainly requires superior man-management skills to deal with a motley crew with an age span of nearly 60 years. Numeracy is also an important part of a successful captain's armoury. Getting 11, rather than 10 or 12, club members to turn up at the right place at the right time week in week out is not as easy as it sounds and in games where the side is short of front-line bowlers, overs must be counted carefully so that five rather than six bowlers can be used to cover the allotted overs. For this game, Ollie had no problem with the first of these; all 11 of us were there on time. Unfortunately and unusually, this was a week when the over counting went wrong. Nigel Mason bowled the 34th over, but of course the rules would not allow him to bowl the 35th as well.

Perhaps it was the bragging rights that his side had won in the All Star game, perhaps it was the teasing from teammates about his duck (step up Harry Brock), or perhaps it was a sense of responsibility, the feeling that having created the problem he should solve it. We will never know what it was, but Ollie decided not to call on veteran off spinner Stan Nelson in his hour of need and to bowl the final over himself. What could possibly go wrong?

The first ball flew over the batsman's head for a wide. The second bounced several times and was despatched for four. Two more boundaries, a single and another wide followed. By this stage there were some in the field who felt that to describe the over as Liquorice All Sorts would be a disservice to Bassetts. Then came the fifth legitimate ball of the over and a mighty blow. The ball sailed towards the boundary and a brave but despairing jump from David Goodfellow could not prevent it from going for six. Kempsford were home and dry (Anthony Axel-Berg 49 no) and the home side had snatched defeat from the jaws of victory. To add injury to insult, David's bravery earned him a fractured finger and put an end to his season.

Sadly the following week, Wolvercote cried off. As can happen with the larger clubs for whom Sunday cricket is secondary, they had other priorities and a Fathers v Sons game, rescheduled to clash with our game because of the pandemic, left them unable to raise a side. They will not be on our Christmas card list this year.

All too quickly the season is drawing to a close. We have two (or perhaps three) games to go and are sorry that the rule of six means that the Terrace Bar is unlikely to open for our remaining games. They will be covered in next month's article, the last of the season, and meanwhile we shall turn our attention to repairing both our pitch and various bits of machinery.

Next year's fixtures will be put on the club website at <https://www.pitchero.com/clubs/islipcricketclub>. The club can be contacted via islipcricketclub@gmail.com. Do get in touch if you'd like to know more – we welcome players of all ages, abilities and experience – or if you'd just like to get involved.