

6th XI Captain's Report 2019

Another challenging but hugely enjoyable season for Wokingham's Berkshire League XI. From 8th place out of 9 teams in 2018, our first season in the BCL, we climbed to 6th out of 10 and a sense that next year we may be able to look up the table, rather than down. That's just the end of the journey on the Fun Bus though, as it was a season of two halves.

At the end of May, we had lost four games out of four and never had a sniff of a win in any of them, in spite of the commitment of everyone selected to play. A brief ray of sunlight was provided by beating Welford Park, thanks to posting a score of 248-2 with Glyn Clements and Toqir Khalid guesting for us and the bionic man, Dersh's run of batting form. After that, though the first half was notable largely for playing possibly the worst game of league cricket I have ever been part of against Earley. Having changed in a barely lit lock up garage as an alternative to 'you can get changed by those trees' and been asked to bat first, their meadow of an outfield and ploughed field of a wicket allowed us to score 2 boundaries in our full quota of 45 overs! It took the hosts more than half their overs and some odd umpiring to chase this down. The game against Reading Lions two weeks later showed us the way forward, a 4 wicket defeat defending 254 was built around Chinmay's excellent 88 and some massive hitting from Sabya. Their umpires removing LBW as a mode of dismissal made their chase easier than it would have been otherwise.

So one win out of 9 at half way and looking set for rock bottom. But...by this stage the core of a competitive side had taken shape (some people were suggesting that the name of that side was actually India!) and the only way was up. 3 wins; a thrilling tie against Welford park with the Kulkarni twins at the helm; a winning draw and the bonus of Sulhamstead and Ufton 3rd XI conceding saw us move steadily up the table, losing only once in the second half of the season.

The two most satisfying wins were against Checkendon, (who had scored 298 in 40 overs against us early in the season) where Sabya Sen and Ranjeet Sidhu engaged in what seemed like a range hitting contest as they put on 120 together to help chase down 202 and then against Knowl Hill the following week. Knowl Hill are a settled side who all contribute and who know their home ground's conditions like the back of their hand. Shiv's extraordinary spell of 9-5-4-4 helped us bowl them out for a below par 130 but we got home at a canter by 5 wickets.

These two games also saw the birth of a legend: Ranjeet's Golden Arm. This extraordinary feat of confidence...and some skill in tempting set batsmen to throw themselves off the cliff also enabled the skipper to escape from having messed up his maths on bowling quotas. Other notable memories from the season include the recreation of scenes from Casualty as Dersh Patel retired hurt to protect his body and his batting average a number of times; the attempt at the splits by the captain while batting on a wet wicket at Peppard Stoke Row; Diptesh Patel deciding to start a riot at Checkendon by calling out their absurd over appealing; Fawad acting as a one-man poster campaign for the mandatory installation of satnavs in cars and

Prabhu showing up the fielding standards of everyone else in the league while smiling seemingly 24/7. (Oh and the end of season curry.)

Shiv Muniyappa, the 'mystery spinner' was the go to bowler to put pressure on the opposition, his 16 wickets came at 14s and as well as his 4 for 4 off 9 he also had a 2 for 6 off 8. Rich Draper and Prabhu Selvaraj took 10 wickets each and Chinmay Kulkarni; Fawad Hasan; Prasad Kulkarni and Mahesh Bhandary were the other major contributors to an increasingly confident bowling unit. The batting strategy evolved into the old firm of Steve Smith and the skipper laying a foundation for the engine room of Chinmay 246 runs at 20; Shiv 227 at 25; Prasad 166 at 23; Dersh 145 at a remarkable 72 or one of Ranjeet or Sabya. The other key was making sure that we built partnerships at the tail, with Paddy Coyne; Rich and Ben Cary all showing the way. Continuity was key, with 9 players playing in half or more of the games.

Thanks to Martin Clements for his behind the scenes admin as well for scoring for us; to the other captains for finding a way to agree how to square the circle of putting out 7 league sides but mostly just to all 43 people who rode the Fun Bus.

Raj Acharya will be taking over the side for 2020 and I wish him and the team every success.