

Results 2016

April		
Sunday 24th	Peper Harrow	Cancelled by opposition (no team)
May		
Sunday 8th	BBC Mishits	Won by 7 wickets
Sunday 15th	WG XI	Lost by 7 wickets
Sunday 22nd	Brightwell-cum-Sotwell	Lost by 99 runs
June		
Sunday 5th	Charlatans	Lost by 5 wickets
Sunday 12th	Ad Hocs	Abandoned as draw after rain
Saturday 18th	King's School, Rochester	Waterlogged pitch
Sunday 26th	Marlborough & Streatham	Waterlogged pitch
July		
Sunday 3rd	North Enfield	Lost by 1 wicket
Sunday 10th	Brigands	Cancelled by us (no team)
Sunday 17th	Mickleham	Lost by 4 wickets
Wed. 20th	RCDS	Won by 1 wicket
Saturday 23rd	Hetairoi	Cancelled by us (no team)
Sunday 31st	Thursley	Lost by 5 wickets.
August		
Sunday 7th	Charlatans	Draw
Thursday 11th	Essex University Staff	Lost by 8w after 137 - 9 (Jonathan W 36)
Friday 12th	Quilibets	Lost by 5w after 222 - 8 (Marc 69, Chris H 44)
Saturday 13th	Worlingworth	Lost by 100+ runs
Sunday 14th	Nazeing Common	Won by 2w chasing 183 - 4 (Baxter 70-odd)
Monday 29th	Elstead	Lost by 24 runs chasing 218.

September		
Sunday 4th	Brill	Lost by 120+ runs (McIntyre 4-59). Top bat: 12!
Saturday 10th	Reading University Staff	Washout
Sunday 11 th	King's School, Rochester	Won by 5 wickets

Fixtures Secretary: Jon Porter

Sunday, 26 March 2017

Chairman's remarks at the 2017 AGM and Annual Awards Ceremony

No Management Consultants involved - the awards were correctly announced...

Some of you may recall last October one of the more bizarre pieces of recent cricketing news, when the Indian Supreme Court no less ordered the Cricket Board of Control to accept the findings of a former Indian Chief Justice on how the governance of the sport should be overhauled.

Coming as it did the week before the Mandarins Committee meeting, this was a bit of a personal wake-up call. There might not, I felt, be much I could do to improve our performances on the field – more on that later - but at least I could ensure by tightening up our governance that we weren't subject to our own committee of enquiry – more likely in our case led by a former senior civil servant, Paul McIntyre perhaps.

So not merely did we had a formal committee meeting this year, albeit one marked by more apologies for absence than members present, we even recorded its conclusions. And in the spirit of transparency, there are copies over there.

The conclusions themselves don't make for very gripping reading, but there are one or two points I should mention

- I'm glad to report that thanks to Tim's sterling efforts the **finances** of the club remain very healthy and despite the inflationary effects of the post-Brexit weak pound, subscriptions remain £30 and match fees a bargain basement £5.
- In terms of results on the field last year I'll draw a veil over our **win/loss** ratio. I'll just note that, with a wet start to the season, more games were abandoned or cancelled than won by us. Never mind.
- More importantly an encouraging 33 Mandarins and guests took to the field at least twice last year. New players are always welcome and if you know anyone who'd fancy a game please encourage them. But the Committee noted that if everyone who played fewer than half a dozen games, and that was most people, played one more, that would make the match managers' lives much easier.
- Jon Porter was, as usual, given lots of aspirational advice on the **fixtures** list. He's still pursuing a number of slots, but it's shaping up well.

Finally, an important conclusion of the Committee was that we should have more annual awards and I was delegated to implement this instruction.

I seem to remember in days gone by a rather disgusting looking bottle of orange liqueur being passed from one recipient to another each year. Perhaps fortunately, that's now disappeared. This year's prizes will be more modest, but I hope more consumable.

So let me turn to the awards themselves.

Some pleasures come early in life and others await the mellower years of middle life. One of the latter, that some of you may also have experienced, are school sports awards nights. I promise that this ceremony will be considerably shorter. But one thing I always like is the prize for Outstanding Sporting All-Round Commitment or **OSAC**. Louis proudly notes on his CV an OSAC for water-polo a year or two ago. In the Mandarins context the OSAC might go, for example, to the player who took the kit home most often or who was most assiduous in writing match reports. But this year I've decided to award it simply to the player who played most often, and who did so in the best Mandarin spirit, batting at pretty much every position in the order, bowling and fielding with panache and not least sporting delightfully colourful footwear; this year's OSAC goes to **Arvind Manian**.

For me the Great British Bake-off is another pleasure that's come later in life, but this year I was gripped. And awarding a *Star Baker* prize to one of our opponents for an outstanding tea might well be a good idea. Instead I've decided to choose a **Star Family**. Louis and I are safely out of contention with a combined bowling average well above our combined batting average. More serious candidates based on multi-generational performances on the field, are the Eastaways and McKeons. But the winners are clear – fielding three players and scoring the winning runs in dramatic circumstances at RCDS – Mandarins Star Family of the Year are the **Porters**.

Having looked at the averages Dan kindly compiled, while there were some notable innings, I decided that on the whole, given our typically low totals, any batting award would be out of place this year. But there were lots of candidates for **Ball of the Year** from among others, Heard, Grey, Eastaway, Foreman himself, Swanson for those who saw his spell at North Enfield, and McIntyre. But I'm going to go for a dismissal that I thought strongly reminiscent of Warne's famous first ball dismissal of Gattling – Hurst's first ball of the Thursley innings in July: Ball of the Year – **Martin Hurst**.

Finally, and I'm afraid I couldn't resist this, **dropped catch of the year**. As always, there were many strong candidates for this prestigious award, not least some of my own, though those have all fortunately already faded from the memory. I wasn't there to see it, but **Heard's** drop at Brightwell sounds to have been particularly egregious, apparently engineered to ensure the possibility of a five wicket haul remained open – at least he took that chance. And then there was **Lowen** at Nazing, dropping a complete sitter at mid-on – nothing especially remarkable in itself about that of course – but he put himself in award contention by then implausibly claiming it was the first time he'd ever dropped a catch for the Mandarins. But in the end there was a clear winner. After playing for the opposition at Worlingworth and catching four blunders, restored to Mandarin colours the following day, our winner promptly dropped a straightforward chance in the ring. Drop of the year: step up **Graeme Tunbridge**.

Let me finish with some well-deserved thanks. First to everyone who played last year for another very enjoyable season. Second, to all the match managers and members of the committee for all they have done do to keep the club going. And I'd like to particularly thank Jon Porter this year who has now done ten years as fixtures secretary and will be stepping down from what I think is one of the more onerous roles.

And finally and most of all to Tim and Emma for so generously hosting us tonight.

Nicholas Davidson

Saturday, 10 December 2016

Averages for 2016

Some great work by Dan 'more wickets than runs' Forman on this year's averages. Details below, and this year I can say with confidence, that appeals will not be heard and the raw data will not be published (even under FOI...)

Top Run Scorers / Averages

1. Baxter 205 at 23
2. Tunbridge 150 at 211
3. Wilmot 147 at 21
4. Healey 143 at 27
5. Manian 137 at 101
6. Lowen 123 at 27
7. Brand 100 at 33
8. N Davidson 89 at 8
9. Somerville 81 at 40.5
10. C McKeon 81 at 13.5

Qualification: 3 innings / 80 runs.

High Scores

1. Somerville 78* vs Thursley
2. Baxter 78 vs Nazeing
3. Baxter 74 vs Elstead
4. Thomas 69 vs Quilibets (Fram)
5. Lennon-Smith 68* vs King's School Rochester
6. Lowen 60 vs North Enfield
7. Wilmot 54 vs King's School Rochester
8. Brand 52 vs BBC
9. Tunbridge 46* vs RCDS¹
10. Brand 47 vs Thursley
11. Healey 44 vs Quilibets (Fram)
12. Healey 41 vs Mickleham

(¹ The book is not entirely clear about ascribing the Manian-Tunbridge partnership at RCDS, including this knock of 46*, although I think it was Graeme so have included it here and in the averages)

Top Wicket Takers and Averages

- McIntyre 19 at 18.84
- Eastaway 17 at 14.18
- Heard 12 at 22 (+22 so 14 wickets)
- Forman 11 at 28.18
- Hurst 10 at 26.1
- Manian 6 at 33.17 (+22 so 8 wickets)
- Gray 7 at 9
- Cooke 6 at 7.33

Qualification: five wickets and two matches.

² the book shows both Arvind and Andy also took two wickets each at Nazeing but their runs conceded were not recorded so these wickets have not been included in the averages.

Best Bowling

1. Heard 5-21 vs Brightwell
2. Gray 4-16 vs BBC
3. McIntyre 4-51 vs Charlatans
4. McIntyre 4-59 vs Brill
5. Hurst 3-5 vs North Enfield
6. Swanson 3-14 vs North Enfield
7. Eastaway 3-19 vs Worlingworth
8. Cooke 3-19 vs WGXI
9. Narayan 3-19 vs BBC
10. Eastaway 3-24 vs Nazeing
11. Cooke 3-25 vs RCDS
12. Hurst 3-31 vs Mickleham
13. McIntyre 3-42 vs Brightwell
14. Healey 3-54 vs Elstead

Dan

Saturday, 8 October 2016

David Bostock

Mandarins, especially those of longer standing, will be sad to hear that David Bostock passed away last month.

David was a regular in the side for much of the 1980s. He may not have been a natural cricketer but he made himself into a proficient batsman, often opening the innings and accumulating with some smart running between the wickets. And he contributed his share of shrewd insights on the workings of Whitehall to the teatime chat. He was my predecessor as Director of

European Policy at the Treasury and went on to more senior positions at UKREP Brussels and the Cabinet Office where for a time he was the Prime Minister's adviser on Europe.

Paul McIntyre

I never encountered David Bostock on the field of play, but remember him as a pugnacious upholder of fiscal discipline at meetings at the Cabinet Office, in the face of potential laxity from the FCO.

Nick Davidson

Sunday, 18 September 2016

Cold Drinks and Canapes in the Rochester Sun and victory on the field

Mandarins (225-6) Beat King's School Rochester Headmaster's XI (223-7) by four wickets

After a Saturday rain-off in Reading it was gratifying to see the weather forecast hold true for a fine Kentish sunny Sunday afternoon in September for our final fixture of the season - and even more gratifying to finish the year with a win in such lovely surroundings.



View from Pavilion (Andy Heard)

Not that it always looked like this would be case. The King's School pitch was still playing well and with a short boundary on the uphill and a fast run down the slope, bowling was hard and fielding even harder. After Heard made an early breakthrough with the new ball, a succession of Headmaster's XI batsmen settled in for substantial contributions of 30 or more. The late-arriving Eastaway eventually bowled the other opener Beacher (36) with a beauty, before Hurst capped a fine 10-over spell with the wicket of big-hitting number three Settle for 40 (also bowled). Healey and Forman also earned one each (at some expense in the latter's case), while McIntyre chipped in with two to cap an excellent season (and if Gareth Batty can still get on the boat to Bangladesh perhaps it's not too late for Paul to make the trip to India

either). However number six Walker remained unbeaten on 51 at the declaration, with 223-7 looking a formidable target.

The talk over a truly stupendous tea of sandwiches, sponges and scones in the Headmaster's garden was that the Mandarins had successfully chased a similar score here just a year before, although many Mandarins remained somewhat cautious given this season's batting form. They would have been even more so had they known that Chris Healey's contribution would be a golden quacker. Nevertheless that did not come until after Manian (27) and Temple (33) had put on a substantial opening partnership of 61 to set up an enticing platform. And after Healey's unusual aberration, Wilmot (54) and Alex Lennon-Smith (68) tucked in to the bowling as it were the Headmaster's teatime spread still on the table. Albeit aided by some generous choices of bowling in aid of generating a result, the Credit Suisse duo took us to the brink of victory with a wonderful stand of 108. And after a Mike Richardson run out special and a quick contribution from McKeon C (11), Lennon-Smith was still there at the end to take us over the line in the final over with two monstrous hits for four.

All that remained was the annual argument over who would take the team kit home for winter, wistful what might have been about this year's many batting collapses and round agreement that the Rochester fixture has become an annual highlight and that this year it provided a fitting end to the season, all aided by cold drinks and canapes in Jonathan's fine garden. Then came the last trains back to London and the melancholy feeling of summer's end and another year of Mandarin cricket gone. Until we meet again in the Spring...

Dan Forman

Saturday, 3 September 2016

Mandarins come second in high scoring game...again

Elstead 218-7 decl., Mandarins 198 all out

The first thing I was asked on entering the changing room was whether I would captain, in the absence of our esteemed chairman. It is always an interesting experience captaining the Mandarins, from the supportive team-mates ("Lost the toss? Only thing you had to do, and you couldn't do it" - sounds like Lowen, Ed.) to the generous advice from everyone on the pitch. So I said yes.

Having indeed lost the toss, the Mandarins fielded first on a glorious Bank Holiday afternoon. Elstead's opening pair, featuring the septuagenarian Pat Murphy and a young lad who looked 12, made reasonable progress against the new ball pairing of Porter *pere* and Arvind. Thereafter it was all spin (or slow at any rate). Paul McIntyre induced the young opener to spoon a catch to Chris Healey, the first of two wickets. Murphy chanced his arm successfully against the bowling of Porter *fille*, whilst Baxter dived ineffectually to try to catch repeated lofts over cow corner. Elstead made steady progress on a good pitch, but never ran away with things, with Chris Healey bowling particularly tidily and taking three wickets. Baker and Baxter also sent down a few leg-breaks. Having bowled a tidy first spell, Gemma Porter came back and took a wicket courtesy of smart work behind the wicket of Jonathan Wilmot (who, for the record, was on time). This was Gemma's fiftieth wicket of the season. Yes that is fifty, five zero. Other

Mandarins could only dream of such a summer. In the end Elstead declared on 218 after 48 hours, with Mandarins having acquitted themselves well.

Baxter and Tunbridge provided a Department of Health opening pair, with Tunbridge in fine form. The fifty came up then Graeme inexplicably missed a straight ball. Chris McKeon came in number 3, and once he sorted out the bounce of the pitch hit a number of boundaries, some with a straight bat. Another fifty or so on the board, and Mandarins were set fair. Thereafter wickets fell more regularly, including Paul Mills top-edging a drive and Arvind run out to a not very good call (sorry). Successive batsmen informed me of their various frailties ("no short singles please, I've got a bad foot".) Chris Healey came in at 7 and was going well when he too was adjudged run out in slightly controversial circumstances. When Baxter holed out for 74 it was time to bat out for a draw. Sadly we were unable to do so, as first Jon Porter then Paul McIntyre holing out, Paul falling in the penultimate over.

All in all an excellent game against good opposition. Roll on next year.

Tim Baxter

Tuesday, 16 August 2016

Postcard from Suffolk

Some of my 2016 tour highlights: four friendly and well-matched opposition teams; fine weather; possibly the best Friday dinner yet at the Station; Ghost Ship in the front garden at the Railway on Saturday evening – nice to see a traditional local making a come-back; *Werewolf* introduced as an additional evening entertainment and providing a fitting way to punish Graeme for batting and catching far better for Worlingworth than he did in his appearances for us; O'Donnell beating Hawkhead two sets to love on the tennis court; the *Eastaway Fold* now officially re-named the *Forman Fold*, but Dan emerging victorious at poker nonetheless; not one but two curries (at least for some) – new competition generally agreed to have raised standards at the Prince of India; the view of Framlingham Castle from the College front door.



Dan Forman's Priorities are Clear...

And I seem to recall we even played some cricket: lost three, won one was it? Davidson run out Baxter on Sunday after Worlingworth failed to accept an even easier gift of Baxter run out Davidson on Saturday sticks in my memory, together with a mix of egregious drops and great takes in the field at Nazeing (Graeme notable in both categories). There were also several fine innings and spells of bowling, but I'll leave comment on those to whoever has the scorebook.

Many, many thanks to Marc and Cheryl for organising another fabulous tour.

Nick Davidson

PS. Anyone with any pictures to share, try uploading [here](#) (you'll need a gmail account).

Tuesday, 9 August 2016

Biggest Shock of the Year?

Charlatans 182, Mandarins 143-8. Match Drawn

The biggest shock of the year so far? Brexit, Trump, Leicester City? The Mandarins posting three figures for the second time in a week? Or Jonathan Wilmott turning up on time for a cricket match? I'll leave Mandarins more experienced than I to pass judgement on this. Suffice to say that many team members had to do a double take to confirm it was he before them, before the allotted start time, at the always lovely Garrison Ground. Sadly, despite Wilmott's unprecedented early arrival, we still did not have 11 men ready to take the field after captain Nick Davidson asked the Charlatans to bat first. Debutant Adnan Khan was a little late himself due to a missed bus and some imprecise instructions from the match manager, somewhat taking the shine off the secretarial achievement in getting Jonathan and nine others there in time for the toss.

Perhaps because we started with 10, or perhaps because as this was the second fixture between the sides this year and they had seen us field before, the Charlantans openers set off in a hurry, determined to run us ragged in the field and take as many quick singles as they could, as well as pushing ones into twos and twos into threes. A strong wind took the edge off the heat but made bowling a bit trickier, especially up the hill for Arvind Manian as the first wicket partnership raced away to a 50. Rob Eastaway eventually got the breakthrough his bowling deserved, running down the hill and with the wind aiding his Anderson-esque away swing. That prompted a steady stream of wickets that began to peg the run rate back a bit and keep the target to semi-realistic proportions (although the hard running between the wickets did not cease). Paul McIntyre took a fine 4-51 from his 10 overs, your correspondent bagged a couple (one thanks to a fine catch from Chris French), Khan took one with this hostile pace (and also combined with Al Munro for a relay run out), before Eastaway returned to pick up a tail ender and bowl them all out for 182, taking the imminent declaration out of the equation in the end.

In reply David Lowen and Munro went early to the Charlantans' lively new ball pair and a pitch known for its unpredictable bounce, bringing Davidson (30) and Wilmott (35) to the crease for a crucial 50 partnership. The Captain and 'Keeper combination, one in cap, the other in white floppy sunhat, encouraged memories of Atherton and Russell in Johannesburg in 1995, batting and battling it out for a draw. A later partnership between Manian (23) and French (35) was more reminiscent of Bairstow and Stokes in Cape Town this year, peppering the boundaries with regularity and leading some to entertain thoughts of a late charge for the win. In reality that was always a long shot of punctual Wilmott proportions, especially after a couple of late wickets left the unbeaten number eight Simon Quarrell and the almost unbeaten Eastaway to see out the final overs before Rob fell to the final ball of the day, leaving the Mandarins 40 runs short of a win but still unbeaten in August at least as we head to the tour.

Danny Forman

Monday, 1 August 2016

Mandarins (175 for 7) come Second in Thursley Run-Fest (176 for 5) by five wickets

As a taster for the forthcoming visit of the *Lashings All Stars* on 4 September (squad includes Devon Malcolm, Owais Shah, Monty Panesar and Gordon Greenidge – tickets £40 including a three course lunch) a small but select group of spectators at the Thursley ground was entertained on a sunny last day of July by a high-scoring game packed with incident, and, for the home crowd, ending with the right result.

On a pitch which turned out to offer both bounce and turn, visiting captain Andrew Somerville won the toss and chose to bat. Though a seriously pacey opening pair quickly reduced the Mandarins to 3 for 2, Somerville (78 not out) was unperturbed, putting on 102 with Brand (47) for the third wicket. With valuable support from Munro and Wilmot (whose late arrival was justified on this occasion by his kindly making himself available at very short notice) a total of 175 off the allotted 35 overs looked competitive.

And for the first 15 overs or so of Thursley's response, it was. Heard bowled with undiminished pace off his diminished run up and was unlucky not to claim a couple of wickets. At the other end Hurst was frequently unplayable. His first ball was a fast leg break which bowled one of

the opening Harris brothers; the look of bewildered disbelief on the batsman's face as he walked back to the pavilion was enough to make the trip down the A3 worthwhile.

Forman, who picked up two wickets, and McIntyre (one) were also frequently threatening, but a sharp missed chance off the latter on Smallbone's first ball proved costly as he and Mearns A (one of another pair of Thursley brothers) began to mull the ball powerfully. At one point a six went into a particularly vicious looking holly bush. Your correspondent was all for giving up the search for the ball, but Munro, made of sterner stuff, found a way in from the back and immediately cried 'I've found a ball, but not sure it's the right one' followed by another voice – 'so have I', and a third, 'and I can see two more', one of which turned out to be the match ball.

The last wicket to fall came in what turned out to be the final over. Needing six to win, Smallbone decided to call Mearns for a suicidal-looking single, it later transpired in order to give him a chance to get to his fifty. Bowler Brand and keeper Wilmot combined, just, to get the bails off in time, but the square leg umpire initially judged the desperately diving batsmen not out, before then changing his mind (no question of any dissent from the Mandarin's fielders influencing him of course...) on the grounds that, while over the line, the bat wasn't grounded. 'The umpire's indecision is always final' someone quipped. Run out 49. Many Mandarin's will empathise.

While Thursley in the end won with plenty of overs in hand, this was one of the better Mandarin's performances of the year. Come on chaps, let's build on the momentum!

Nick Davidson

Wednesday, 27 July 2016

Mandarins –v- RCDS (at Burton Court)

RCDS: 171-7; Mandarins 173-9.

This match was witness to a conjunction of rare events this summer: the sun beat down; we didn't drop a catch in the field; Hurst played a restrained innings; Heard unfurled his much hidden off-drive and to cap it all, the Mandarins managed to pluck victory from the jaws of defeat!

As usual a splendid venue for what turned out to be match which came right down to the wire. Due to illness, Mike and Wendy Foot were unable to join us this year for the Rob Foot memorial match but there was much in the match which would have appealed to Mike's love of the more quizzical aspects of the game of cricket as practised by the Mandarin's CC.

RCDS won the toss and contrary to the norm, elected to bat first. A tight opening spell from Rob ("I only came to drop off the kit, oh, go on then, one more over") Eastaway and Owen Cooke saw RCDS reduced to 25-4. By this stage we had seen their umpire gently admonishing the opening pair after the first over for not having played a single defensive shot and the full multinational/multi-service nature of the course at RCDS on display with debuts to representatives from Norway (fielding for us) and Latvia (1 run before being ruthlessly stumped by Baxter in full "jack-in-the-box" mode). However, the fall of wickets brought RCDS's captain to the wicket to join opening bat Squires (RAF) for what proved to be a very

productive century partnership. They calmly yet effectively accumulated runs, playing the good balls sensibly and cutting loose with anything full or wide. Baxter rotated his bowling with spells from Porter (Gemma), Heard, Hurst, Manian and Porter (Jon) but it was only really the retirement of Squires on 60-odd that opened up one end. Nevertheless, the RCDS skipper marshalled his remaining troops through to a very competitive 171 runs.

The Mandarins started brightly with Tunbridge in particular looking well-set. After Manian had perished to a “death or glory” heave, Tunbridge and Mills combined well with Tunbridge providing the “languid style” (copyright T.Hawkhead) and Mills the brute force. Tunbridge (46) and (28) Mills fell in relatively quick succession (Mills adjudged lbw by umpire Andy (“friend of the bowler”) Heard to one that looked a tad high from 75 yards away) but then Hawkhead and Hurst belied the years (and their team mates’ expectations) with a display of controlled batting that meant we were ticking quite along nicely. Then it all went a bit pear-shaped. A sudden flurry of wickets meant that when the 9th wicket fell and with no sign of Andy (“Don’t worry, I’ll be there for the second innings”) Somerville, RCDS thought that they were victorious. However, they reckoned without the 3rd member of the Porter family – Helen (“I’ll bat if you’re really, really desperate”) Porter. Relieved of scoring duties and hurriedly padded up, Helen was sent in with the instructions to bat out for a draw. In true Mandarin style, she treated her captain’s instructions as merely advisory and she and Heard proceeded to knock off the remaining 16 or so runs from 3 overs with Andy bludgeoning the winning runs (for which he duly received the traditional “champagne moment”).

So with the Mandarins recording only their second win of the season, there was just one question for the statisticians. When was the last time that the Mandarins fielded three members of the same family? Speculation was that it might have been in the time of the Jarvii (plural form of Jarvis? [*Les Jarvies, surely; Ed.*]); but we await confirmation.

Jon Porter

Monday, 18 July 2016

Well, Slightly Better Than England Perhaps (Perhaps)

The Mandarins succumbed to a tough Mickleham side but showed a touch more resilience than England against Pakistan on the fourth day at Lord’s.

Nick Davidson won the toss in a 35-over match and elected not to field on a sunny and muggy afternoon and on a lush green outfield.

Arvind Manian was an early departure against a steady and occasionally quick Mickleham attack. However, Chris Healey (41) and David Lowen saw us to 75 for the second wicket. There were claims from the boundary that more singles might have been taken: not, however, with Healey’s legs and Lowen’s lungs. Don’t ask too much, dear onlookers: it’s your turn next.

From Lowen’s departure (24) after a drinks break, only Graeme Tunbridge (23) and Al Munro (17) delivered much needed runs and The Mandarins struggled to 133 when perhaps 170-180 would have been needed. Tim Baxter was run out – and it wasn’t his fault.

The bowling showed better applications than the batting. Martin Hurst (3 for 30) especially, Jean-Christophe Gray, Andy Heard, Rob Eastaway and Arvind bowled a steady enough line

and occasional good length also. Mickleham's batting was more than equal to the challenge with lusty if sometimes lucky blows.

Mention should be made of the "Ball of the Season". From covers and square leg, they will marvel at the subtlety of the length. From behind the wicket, there will be eulogies about late swing taking the ball from leg to the very top of middle. From the batsman (highly competent), there was merely a plaintive "That was a good ball" as he retreated. From the bowler in the dressing room later, there were reflections on other such brilliant balls he had bowled but which none of us could recall ("I remember at....."). Nice one, J-C.

We lost by 4 wickets and no catches were dropped.

At the pub later, there were roast potatoes in gravy with tequila drunk in unison from five glasses attached to an old wooden ski. Truly. All so much more fun than league cricket.

David Lowen

Wednesday, 6 July 2016

Single Wicket Loss on Debut at Enfield

Mandarins 115 All Out Enfield Town 116 for 9, won by one wicket

If the Brexiteers have their way, we'll soon be going back to how England was in the early 1970s. In which case they'd be delighted with how the Mandarins scoreboard looked 20 overs into this match: 42 for 2, reminiscent of the days of Boycott and Edrich grafting their way to lunchtime on the first day. The fact that one of the Mandarins batsmen at the crease was David Lowen, one time producer of Geoff Boycott documentaries, was surely more than a coincidence.

The pitch wasn't one of those sticky dogs of old, but it was low and slow, with a lush outfield that made it very hard to force the ball to the boundary. And our batsmen were struggling to come to terms with it. With the score on 25 a frustrated Baxter cracked the ball to point, called himself for a quick single, changed his mind, fell over, and succumbed to a slow motion run out as he crawled back to the crease. Somerville and Manion came and went trying to force the pace, and there then followed a middle order collapse as Munro, Swanson and a brace of Davidsons fell victim to the low bounce.

But Lowen was pacing himself, and having realised there wasn't much future in strolling singles, he began to take the aerial route as he suddenly discovered his timing. When he was finally out, he had made somewhere between 54 and 60 (there was some dispute between him and the scorers) out of 97. It was down to the final pair of Eastaway and Hurst to lift the score to 115, the former endeavouring to get himself a batting average this season by calling a couple of Baxteresque singles. Some might say there was a certain inevitability about how this would end, as Eastaway clipped a ball a ball to wide mid on and called for a single but Hurst (who had by this stage gone on strike when it came to backing up) ignored the call until his partner had covered 20 of the 22 yards.

Would 115 be enough?

After three overs, Enfield had lost three wickets and scored two runs. After ten overs they were 17 for 4. The batsmen were struggling to do anything more than keep Hurst out. But the pressure slowly lifted as Enfield's batsmen began to find the boundary. A couple of loose overs from the change bowlers and they were 80 for 4 and coasting. With a last throw of the dice, Davidson persuaded a reluctant Harry Swanson to bowl. Nobody knew quite what to expect, but what Harry produced were awkward, popping leg breaks reminiscent of ex-Mandarin Mike O'Shea. A double wicket maiden followed. Eastaway came back at the other end and had the No.5 batsman caught brilliantly by Munro diving forward at square leg. Another wicket from Harry. 95 for 8. The new batsman decided to give it a bit of humpty. Somerville, returning for a second spell, finally trapped him LBW. Six to win and one wicket left. A no ball hit for four. Then another full toss, pulled in the air towards midwicket - clipping Arvind's finger tips but not sticking. Enfield had won, but it was by far the closest game of the season so far, and all the more enjoyable for that.

Rob Eastaway

Tuesday, 14 June 2016

Signs of Mandarin Sunshine between the Showers

Ad Hocs 166-5 Mandarins 80-4 Match abandoned as a draw

It was a game with more interruptions than a John Humphrys interview but a conclusion less satisfactory than a Jim Naughtie monologue. Credit though to the Ad Hocs who persevered through a morning of weather in which most local cricket matches were called off and an afternoon in which the covers came on and off again more quickly than batsmen in a Mandarins middle order collapse. The opposition weren't going to give their goal of a game of cricket against the Mandarins up easily but, while we may or may not have gone on to beat them, the Dulwich weather eventually did.

Between the showers, there were some signs of Mandarin-coloured sunshine, both metaphoric and even at one point literal. On the basis of our recent batting form, match manager Eastaway negotiated an 80-over declaration game with the Ad Hocs batting first. And it was a decision they may soon have been regretting, with their upper order looking distinctly uncomfortable in the face of a hostile spell from Gray (6-1-15-2) and some trickery from Hurst, both extracting good bounce with the new ball. However the Ad Hocs number four Sarson rode his luck and took advantage of a couple of drops (mentioning no names as one of them might have been the Chairman) to make a streaky but brutal 65, while at the other end number three Davis made a steadier and unbeaten 67.

Drops aside, the fielding was otherwise most un-Mandarinesque, with Baxter doing his best Jonty Rhodes impression and the faultless Chris 'no byes' McKeon making a good claim for the England gloveman's spot being debated on TMS that morning with a 'keeper's hat trick hat trick of a caught behind, stumping and run out to his name. Your correspondent and McIntyre picked up one apiece, while Healey and Baker both deserved better than their figures suggested as the Ad Hocs opened their arms for some declaration hitting at the end of the innings to set us what would've been a season's best 167 in 45 overs.

In reply Baxter and Baker were solid in defence in the four overs before tea but they both lost their patience thereafter. Manian played nicely at number three for 22 but a couple of wickets

fell either side of another rain delay and at that stage the latest in the series of this season's low batting totals was looking marginally more likely than a Mandarins win. However Healey (32*) and McKeon were going well when a further, frustrating – and what proved to be final – shower began and the only solace was to be found in a pint of the local Brockley Brewery's excellent (if somewhat ironically named in the circumstances) Summer Ale behind the bar.

Danny Forman

Monday, 6 June 2016

Mandarins Lose to Charlatans by 5 Wickets

On a beautiful summer's day, Mandarins arrived eager to get on with the game. Too eager in fact... fully 10 Mandarins were hanging around a locked entrance gate for 20 minutes before the first opposition player turned up. On a dodgy-looking wicket (which we had to pick a few daisies off before the start of play) Mandarins were put into bat. Captain's advice following two consecutive Mandarin totals in the 60s was to bat the overs out. Sadly Arvind Manian got a grubber third ball and played on. French, McKeon (after a couple of upper cuts), Davidson and Brand soon followed, leaving us 16 for 5. The pitch and the bowlers were proving too much of a handful, with a swinging ball, some balls popping and others keeping low. Al Munro and Jon McInerney restored a "veneer of respectability" in the middle order before we were eventually out for 77, Jon and Extras joint top scoring with 17 apiece. Worryingly this was our second-highest total of the season. In reply Rob Eastaway started us off well, bowling their opener second ball. But the Charlatans batsmen were channelling Brendon McCullum and were keen to finish things quickly with a few big straight fours and a few streaky heaves too. Wickets fell regularly, with Eastaway, McInerney, Forman and McIntyre all weighing in with a wicket or two, but 77 was not a big enough total to defend, and Charlatans got home with 5 wickets down before the Royal Artillery Barracks clock had struck 6.

Sam Brand

Saturday, 28 May 2016

Slow and Low at Brightwell

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell 160; Mandarins 61. Brightwell won by 99 runs.

Put in by Baxter, on the usual low and slow wicket here, the home side batted steadily, put away the bad balls and in Holland had the one batsman on either side to build a long innings (54).

Heard was the mainstay of the Mandarins attack, taking 5 for 21 in 12 overs. Having taken four, his chances of taking a five-for looked to have gone, as the last man looped up a simple catch to him at mid-wicket, but something told Andy he had to drop it. And sure enough, in his next over, a [truly] wonderful diving catch by Munro at point brought the innings to an end and got Andy his just reward.

McIntyre (3-42) was economical, except when being hit for four sixes. Manian (2-21) also chipped in with key wickets to contain Brightwell in the second half of their innings.

Only two Mandarins batsmen reached double figures: Chris McKeon (16) and French (13). Otherwise, it was largely a case of failure to adapt to the pitch, though the Yorker that bowled Manian would probably have done for most of us. Just for a moment, as the last hour ticked away, there seemed a faint chance of a draw, but the end came with six of the last 20 overs left.

Despite a rain shower which held up play for 10 minutes in the Brightwell innings, this was a lovely Oxfordshire spring day, rounded off with our friendly hosts in the Red Lion

Mandarins XI: Baxter (capt.), French, Heard, Manian, Munro, McIntyre, McKeon A, McKeon C, Tivey, Tunbridge, Williams L

Paul McIntyre

Sunday, 15 May 2016

Sack the Chairman - Mandarins Rolled

Mandarins 62 all out (J X Trass 23, Baxter 15) off 21 overs lost by 7 wickets to WG XI 63 for 3 off 8.1 overs (Cooke 3 for 19).

Those of us with long memories of playing for the Mandarins on the uncovered pitches of the 1970s and 1980s will remember lower scores than this, but they are rare these days. On a perfect cricket day in front of a large crowd on the bank at Regent's Park, the fates conspired to bring us down to earth hard. We won the toss and then pulled our long hops straight into square legs hands. They hit theirs for four. The wicket was certainly sub-standard, and low bounce claimed at least four victims. WG prospered with a judicious mixture of wides and straight grubbers. Possibly the Brazilian martial arts class at extra cover which involved protagonists beating the crap out of each other with long sticks proved a distraction. Once we began to slide we were unable to stem the tide and use up the overs. Only the exploding pads seemed to have the measure of the situation until Tim, having taken up a stance one yard down the wicket to the left arm over bowler "to take lbw out of the equation" was out lbw. He clearly had not explained his strategy to the umpire.

80 or 90 might have been defensible, but the laughing gods decreed that last week's destroyer of the BBC (Gray, not the other one) pulled a hamstring in completing the 62nd run, and was unable to Bowl, or very soon even field. Owen Cooke made the WG top order look very shaky, and we put down more technical chances, raising the seasons running total to 10, but then a man called Cunningham hit a lucky 47 not out off 5 overs to put the result beyond doubt. *Que sera sera.*

Chris Baker

Monday, 9 May 2016

BBC Defeated by Mandarins

BBC Mishits 138 all out; Mandarins 139 for 3 won by 7 wickets.

You thought it was only certain politicians who had it in for the BBC. Well, it's some of the civil servants too. Under blue skies at Burnham CC, the Mandarins won their first game of the season, the first under new Chairman, Nick Davidson, defeating the BBC Mishits with the 20 overs of the last hour unused.

Opting to bat, the Mishits made a frenetic start. But Gray pegged them back, with the decisive spell of the match: 4 for 16 in 5 overs. The middle order rallied, but 3 wickets for Suryakumar, one each for Coyne and McIntyre, and a brilliant run out by Brand with a direct hit from the covers, finished the innings in just 27 overs.

An opening stand of 84 between Temple and Brand saw the Mandarins well on the way to victory. Temple was lbw for 23, and Brand was out shortly afterwards for 52, including six fours and two sixes. Old men on the boundary recalled Mandarins collapses of years ago when victory was in sight. But, though Baker was caught on the drive, there were no further alarms, as the Chairman steered his side home with 26 not out.

This wasn't entirely a case of New Model Mandarins. At least eight chances went down in the field. Though some fell into the 'technical' category, others were in the best Mandarins tradition

Mandarins XI: Davidson (captain), Baker, Brand, Coyne, Gray, Healey, McIntyre, McKeon C, Pharoah, Suryakumar, Temple.

Paul McIntyre