

Following last weeks rain cancellation the sun was once again shining and to lift the gloom further El Mago was back. This weeks trip to Ightham was hastily rearranged when it transpired we were not playing 'the' Ightham cricket club but a wandering side based in the village. This meant last minute preparations which resulted in a rather comical marking of the pitch, as two lines were painted, and i am still not convinced we were using the right ones !

Once again Downe elected to bat first and with injuries and holidays still taking their toll a new look top order saw Skipper turn back the years to open with Spindles. Experienced Downe watchers knew this meant one thing, select a cold beer and settle in for a long nap. Sadly i had to remain awake, as umpire, as the batsmen set about taking the shine off the ball. Skipper was connecting well but sadly managed to pick out the fielders with precision. A moment of fortune saw skip gain a reprieve with the same fielder then taking a blinder to remove Spindles for a 12 ball duck!

The Bear at number three meant the danger of any running subsided even further. The run rate remained at a steady 1 after the first 13 before the pair suddenly found some success. Runs were now coming at a reasonable rate with some big shots before Bear had one swing to many being bowled for 36. Skipper made the drinks break before falling shortly afterwards for 26. Like England Downe are renowned for a good collapse and so it proved again as old boy Josh was out first ball. Parf departed run out following a couple of lusty blows leaving the innings on 89-5. With just over ten overs left things were looking dodgy. New boy Josh had been joined by El Mago and the pair set about the bowling mixing boundaries with some audacious running. In no time the score board was spinning like a roulette wheel with the pair eventually remaining unbeaten new boy Josh (34) El Mago (30) and a competitive total of 164 being set.

Following a lovely tea the team took the field with a dangerous looking bowling attack, packed with pace and spin options. The 'slow seamer' void left by Denzils absence had also been covered by Jonny the other half of Downe's latest father / son combo. Confidence was only tempered when the identity of the keeper was learnt as amazingly Spindles was given another run behind the sticks, despite memories still fresh of the worst keeping spell in the clubs history. (See Cudham match report).

The 'old' Josh was chomping at the bit and was soon firing them down. Pace was not met with accuracy and it wasn't long before the byes were flowing a plenty. El Mago bowled a mean line keeping one end tight. Short spells were the order of the day with 'spin twins' Parf and Ben introduced 8 overs in. Both were finding a reasonable line with a bit of turn discovered. Wickets now came with the pair sharing 5 between them. The oppo whilst never cutting loose remained just below the run rate. The fielding was looking surprisingly agile with some great stops by Nick and Bill and young legs in the two Josh's chasing down the ball. Catches were even being taken with Bear pouncing with ease at mid off and old josh taking a 'ripper' running backwards. With the spinners bowling out, the slow option was continued from the pavilion end in the shape of the Bear who with some cunning flight picked up one bowled. The other end saw Jonny trundling in and immediately finding a good line. Sporting a 'beer belly' and little pace he was fitting the Downe model. Clearly he is also rather fortunate as he also picked up two wickets both caught by Spindles which frankly is nothing short of a miracle. A third was sadly dropped though according to him it was a world class save preventing a boundary.

Some tight bowling at the end ensured that the team came out on top securing a close victory by 6 runs.

Most cricketers will go through their whole careers without seeing a 'penalty five' runs being awarded though for the second time this year the ball was allowed to roll onto a stray helmet. Though when one considers the identity of the keeper its probably unsurprising. To have a 100% record of conceding penalty runs, when keeping, is a truly remarkable record.