

Downe triumph in exciting finish.

This week saw the gentlemen of Downe travel the short distance to local rivals Cudham looking to get things back on track. The pre match talk centred simply on whether 11 players could be found with the list of absentees growing, and the queues for the treatment room lengthening.

Cometh the hour, step forth Skipper, who also dragged along Tom despite further drunken dog related injuries the night before and Dave for his season debut. Clearly the competition for the slips position was going to be fierce.

With the sun shining the team needn't have worried, no chance Skipper would bowl first especially with record breakers Spindles and Dave back together.

The innings started fairly positively, Dave getting used to the feel again, whilst Spindles played some uncharacteristic attacking strokes which as you'd expect resulted in a quick departure and an hour of sulking in the Pavillion. Dave's departure saw Parf join his son, who having started cautiously was now hitting the ball to all parts soon reaching his 50. The drinks break often changes games and so it was again as Trub was surprisingly bowled. Sweets walk to the crease took longer than his stay in the middle and he was soon followed by Nev given the trigger by Denzil.

With around 18 overs left and the score 80 odd for 5 things were not looking good as Josh walked to the crease. What followed was a superb partnership of belligerent hitting and milking singles once the field had been dropped. Josh appeared in little trouble from the bowling but great danger from his kit as his glasses fell off virtually every ball often dangerously close to the stumps. He also managed to loose both pads on one single ! It appears that he was talked out by his team mates on 49 who were calling for another 6 as stumps were splattered. Parf then marshalled short partnerships with Denzil and Bill, who was out twice in quick succession, the first by a vicious high full toss, and recalled by the opposition. Parf eventually went, to leave the final balls to the Hobbs family with the innings ending on an unlikely 184 - 9.

With a score on the board, an array of pace bowlers and a team of honed athletes Skipper looked confident. Josh was given the slope, reward for his earlier display as Sweet lumbered up the slope. Not much happened for a while as runs trickled. Changes in the attack brought little change to the run rate as Denzil and Spindles continued. Denzil was the first to achieve a breakthrough shortly followed by Spindles both through catches after the batsmen recognised the need to move things along. Tom was then unlucky as a big nick to the keeper was 'not heard' and the batsmen stood his ground.

Spindles was replaced by Parf who looked less pleased when a change of keeper saw Spindles replace Trub. In one move two modes of dismissal had been removed. Parf soon got in the groove recognising that he would need to hit the stumps. Sadly Spindles had become an even 'chirpier' version of his self though sadly the phrase 'watch and learn' had been barely uttered before he missed a serious of stumpings though if he ever considers a career in the circus his 'juggling clown act' would be an instant hit. In a strange way the fall of wickets were now hurting the team as Cudham were now unleashing their sluggers. Skipper took another of his specialist 'deflected slip catches' with a full length fall and a one handed pouch after the edge had deflected off Spindles whose hands were as expected no where near the ball. With Parf sniffing a 'five for' sadly his fielders were not up go the mark as Sweet dropped a low one and a top edge eluded Spindles who simply needed to look up. Sweet now steaming down hill picked up one before replaced by Josh who picked up a brace, bowled, and unluckily had two dropped in the deep. Sweet even managed, for the second year running, to punch a catch over the ropes for 6 !! Though this year he was at least on the rope. With the final pair at the crease 14 runs were required and things were tense. Thoughts flitted to earlier moments, especially when the 'keeper clown' had managed to let one through his hands to hit the helmet for a penalty 5. With man of the moment Parf we needn't have worried as a series of singles resulted in even bigger swings of the bat and the final wicket falling.