

London Erratics v *The Times*

A noon start to accommodate the (football) World Cup had older heads on both sides muttering ‘In my day...’ An Erratics team packed with new mid-season signings. Would they add the missing steel – or would they discover our ways? Erratics skipper Richard Heller won the toss, pretended to assess the unusually mottled wicket, and carried out his pre-conceived plan of fielding first.

Brian Berrigan put the new ball immediately into the right places. Lift and movement troubled the dangerous *Times* openers. In 5 overs he yielded only six scoring shots, and removed two batsmen – bowled and caught behind. At the other end, newcomer Jimmy McGhie got his bearings after a few aerial deliveries, and also disconcerted the *Times* upper order with lift. They inched to 43 against tight-set fields and unusually alert fielding, led by another newcomer Otto Blom. Then followed mayhem. Mawson (a previous century maker) was caught off Brian by Matthew Neal at midwicket, brilliantly and to general astonishment, turning and running back (Oscar nomination). Jimmy was bowling well but without reward until Richard tried the traditional Erratic ploy of ‘Last over, unless something happens’. Something did happen: three wickets in seven balls, with no addition to the score – caught Chris Dunabin in the remarkably packed slip cordon, caught newcomer Jesh Rajasingham at square leg, clean bowled. 47 for 6!

Surely, this could not last? Brian bowled on and on, but Fildes and the left-handed Cox began to re-establish the innings, with occasional violent blows over the fields which were still tight-set by the captain (why?). With the score on 92, Fildes hit an enormous skyer off Brian: to everyone’s relief, Jesh was underneath it; to everyone’s surprise, he dropped it. The scene then became what the French call *mouvementée*. The batsmen lurched into a run without any apparent call. Jesh, after apologies and curses, remembered to throw the ball towards the danger (non-striker’s) end: it missed. Against all probability, Richard was backing up; against all probability, he did not hurl it wildly at the stumps, but lobbed it at Brian who broke the stumps and ran out the big-hitting Fildes by a long way.

Perhaps as a reward, Richard put himself on in place of Jimmy. After initial rubbish, the ball swung for him: mostly outside off stump, but at least it was cheap. Cox found a reliable partner in Smith and the score mounted steadily but with no great freedom. Everyone worked exceptionally hard in the field: Otto continuing to cut off fierce shots, and yet another newcomer, Martin Shenfield, doing major work in the outfield, despite a dodgy knee (who put him there?) After 14 continuous overs of uninterrupted merit, Brian was eventually replaced by the offspin of Tony Poulter. A well pitched-up ball secured an lbw against the obdurate Smith. Partnered by his captain, Robert Cole, Cox completed fifty. Some hard chances were not accepted, a plausible lbw was refused. Would the *Times* escape? No. A fine drifting ball by Tony induced the stumping of Cox: Nasir Khawaja was not satisfied with his first attempt, so he achieved it on his second. Not long after this success, Tony tweaked a calf muscle and hobbled off. Apart from the physical agony, he faced the mental anxiety of having to produce an explanation for the injury when he was presumed to be doing the weekly shopping at Tesco.

Belatedly, Otto relieved Richard and in his first competitive bowling for several years, produced a hostile spell of left-arm over. Nonetheless, we failed to take the last wicket, but the *Times* reached tea at 180 for nine – about 70 runs short of their par score on this ground.

181 has been a big ask for the Erratics against these opponents. It looked so when Chris poked a very wide ball to slip, and Matthew Neal, after some pleasing shots, carved a less wide one to another slip. 19 for 2: a platform for collapse. But now the transfer policy showed its results. Jesh was a class act, forcing the ball with time to spare off front foot and back: his new partner David Garforth-Bles varied classical driving with violent sweeps. Occasionally troubled by the mixed spin and loop of Le Roux, they put on 67 at around 5 an over, and raised the pressure on the opposition. A fierce caught-behind appeal off Jesh was turned down by umpire Martin, but he did not add much more before missing a straight full toss. Nasir came in and immediately looked at ease, even when he lost David to an excellent low caught-and-bowled. Jimmy joined him and they both produced a burst of boundaries, until Jimmy was brilliant caught low down off a skimming drive.

133 for 5. Plenty of overs left to score 48. Nasir now in complete command. However, Tony, wise to this team over the years, insisted on remaining available to bat with an icepack strapped to the tormented limb. No worries. Brian came in and scored freely, but left just enough for Nasir to complete a serene fifty with seven fours. The scores were level and Robert Waller announced that the required run rate was 0.02 per over. It was achieved with the aid of a wide.

A rare victory, to which everyone contributed. Brian and Jimmy bowled with real menace, the back-up bowling was adequate, the effort in the field was tremendous, the new signings produced real strength and quality in our batting, and allowed Nasir and Brian for once to bat without pressure.

THE TIMES — batting

1	c Neal	b Berrigan	27
2		b Berrigan	2
3	c Khawaja	b Berrigan	4
4	c Dunabin	b McGhie	9
5	c Rajasingham	b McGhie	2
6		b McGhie	0
7	run out		10
8	st Khawaja	b Poulter	79
9	lbw	b Poulter	7
10	not out		14
11	not out		16

180 for 9 dec

LONDON ERRATICS — bowling

Berrigan	15	2	54	3
McGhie	10	0	42	3
Heller	7	1	26	0
Poulter	6	1	38	2
Blom	4	0	15	0

Fall of wickets: 1–7, 2–27, 3–43, 4–47, 5–47, 6–47, 7–92, 8–128, 9–153,

LONDON ERRATICS — batting

			4s	6s
Dunabin	caught	0		
Neal	caught	12	2	
Rajasingham	bowled	42	6	
Garforth-Bles	c & b	38	5	1
† Khawaja	NOT OUT	53	7	
McGhie	caught	11	2	
Berrigan	NOT OUT	20	3	
Shenfield				
Blom				
* Heller				
Poulter				

181 for 5

Fall of wickets: 1(Dunabin)–0, 2(Neal)–19, 3(Rajasingham)–86, 4(Garforth-Bles)–98, 5(McGhie)–133