

London Erratics v V & A

Strangely, captain Nasir Khawaja had faced extreme difficulty recruiting a team. Congenial opponents (whom we've occasionally beaten), almost midsummer, beautiful setting with red kites wheeling overhead, toothsome lunch: what makes people prefer Wormwood Scrubs on a dank afternoon in April?

So only seven Erratics were expected, but the V&A had decently promised to 'make a game of it somehow'. In practice, when Chris Dunabin arrived only 15 minutes after the advertised 11.30 start, he was the sole Erratic confronting four V&A, clad in white but regaling each other with tales of journeys via Birmingham and/or Beachy Head to avoid accidents on the M40. Nasir was known to be on his way with son Jasper via a rendez-vous with Brian Berrigan and Matthew Eltringham at Haddenham Parkway; but Stonor is pleasantly free from mobile phone reception, so it couldn't be ascertained whether Richard Heller was stuck in traffic or suffering motivational deficiency following his defeat in the final of *Mastermind* the night before. Heavy cloud and light drizzle stirred memories of 2007's washout...

Somehow a start was made by 1.10, the captains having agreed to a 30-over match to allow for the late start, lack of players, waist-high hay meadows threatening frequent lost balls, and leisurely lunch and tea in prospect. The two lowest-scoring Erratics would bat twice if required, and V&A would supply two sub fielders. (V&A won the toss.)

Erratic optimism was not lifted by the sight in the V&A ranks of Sunil Julka, who had scored a match-winning 119 for *The Times* against them only a week before. Did he possess the appropriate qualifications, journalistic and antiquarian, for this switch of allegiance? He quickly confirmed his all-round talents, and/or that he'd been learning from the World 20/20, by bowling Chris with a slow yorker, then inducing Matthew E to mis-pull a quicker high but narrowly legal full-toss.

The other opener lost his line after three tight overs, to be replaced by a man who never found his: 18 off an over, including five wides twice, doubled the Erratics score, but V&A captain Richard Woolhouse ungenerously withdrew him from the attack. Brian set out to accumulate, and Matthew N struck some firm blows, against bowling – medium-pace at one end, off-spin at the other – that remained tight if not penetrative throughout, until Matthew was bowled off his pads.

Lunch is always a highlight of this fixture, and rare roast beef, ham, pork pie, pasta salad and beer didn't disappoint (vegetarians perhaps excepted), though the home side – familiarity having induced hyper-criticality – chuntered about the lack of green salad.

Nasir looked stylishly aggressive as always until he was well caught off a firm but uppish cut, Jasper displayed resolute defence until he too was bowled, and Richard fell to a direct hit from square leg. Brian ground on but couldn't raise the scoring rate and was finally well caught at the wicket; and Matthew E (tactical choice from among three equal-second-lowest scorers) had little time to make an impact, still less second revenant Chris who didn't face a ball. At least the Erratics had used up their overs; but 149 was plainly not enough.

The two Matthews opened and bowled tidily enough, but V&A openers Rupert Morris and Andy Fraser made batting look rather easier and ticked off five an over. One V&A sub made a perhaps too casual effort to catch Morris, but Matthew E spared him any embarrassment by doing the job himself later that over. (Sunil J, the other sub, fielded excellently throughout.)

Chris, whose non-turning leg-breaks were a surprise introduction before tea, had two good lbw shouts in his first over: V&A keeper and umpire Nicky Bird admitted in his match report (see below) that he may have given Fraser the benefit of non-existent doubt, indeed even non-striker Richard W muttered dissent!

Tea rivalled lunch in quality, and most Erratics concluded that they were already so slow in the field that a fourth slice of cake would have little impact. After tea, the V&A decided to get on with it as more rain threatened. Brian bowled as well as usual but was treated with unusual disdain, and Jasper (given a good write-up in the V&A report) suffered some severe punishment after two tidy overs; hay-meadow searches began to feature as they hadn't in the Erratics innings. Nasir, standing up to Brian, completed a sharp stumping, and Richard W distinguished himself by walking when the umpire appeared unmoved; non-striker Fraser indicated that his gentlemanliness wouldn't have stretched so far. But it was far too late. Nasir recalled Chris, setting him the simple target of taking eight wickets for no runs: he failed, and V&A won with almost seven overs to spare. Not the fiasco it might have been, but you can't win with seven men. Heavy rain held off until the teams were relaxing in the garden of the Rainbow.

CD

For V&A's match report: www.londonerratics.com/oppos/v&a.html#2009

LONDON ERRATICS — batting

		4s	6s
Dunabin	bowled	3	
Eltringham	caught	5	
Berrigan	caught	68	10
Neal	bowled	16	2
*† Khawaja N	caught	15	3
Khawaja J	bowled	5	1
Heller	run out	5	1
Eltringham (bis)	NOT OUT	6	
Dunabin (bis)	NOT OUT	0	

149 for 7 in 30 overs

V & A — batting

1	c & b	b Eltringham	19
2	not out		62
3	st Khawaja N	b Berrigan	46
4	not out		20
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			

153 for 2 in 23.1 overs

LONDON ERRATICS — bowling

Eltringham	6	0	27	1
Neal	6	0	34	0
Dunabin	2.1	0	10	0
Heller	1	0	9	0
Khawaja J	4	0	36	0
Berrigan	4	0	23	1

ERRATICS LOST BY 8 WICKETS