

They say that all good things come to those that wait. With the early dawning of a new summer comes the main reason we all love this country- the beginning of the new cricket season. As the Gentlemen of Bedales once more took to the pitch at the hallowed shrine of cricket that is the Bedales Memorial Pitch, there was an air of long awaited expectation. New shots gleaned from the 20:20 series had been keenly practiced in the sparkling new nets. Balls had been seen swinging wildly. Fingers and palms still stinging from the warm up fielding practice. The GOB were once again ready to take on all comers.

Out to the middle came our worthy opponents. There was a spring in the step of the Buriton opening batsmen that belied the massive journey that they had made to get to the ground. Thoughts of stiffness in the limbs after the two junctions of the A3 were speedily dispelled. With Bott and Stevens opening the bowling, there was little on offer for the openers to dispatch. A keenly set field was letting nothing through. Jerry Brand showed his new agility honed from a winter of Pilates and Yoga. Wrightie behind the stumps paid homage to the greatest sledger of all time, the absent Will Petrie, with an almost constant barrage of encouragement and exhortation. Jay Greene was like a whippet at cover, his bright cap a blur of multicoloured activity. Brand the Younger had the measure of his game at slip. Two ankle operations had clearly given him an extra spring in his step. Perhaps just a little too much. A couple of spirited dives, both over the ball, left the batsmen in tact. With the openers penned in, the first bowling change saw the arrival of Clappie and Stevie Gardner. They picked up where our own Lillie and Thompson had left off- a mixture of pace, accuracy and cunning. This was bowling of the highest standard, with the opposition left prodding at thin air.

Keen to make more of a spectacle of it, our skipper decided another bowling change was in order, calling to the wicket Hillsie and Lambo Lamber. The field set a little deeper expecting the batsmen to take advantage of our generosity. Torres for £50m, phone tapping by The News of the World- it all seemed like a good idea at the time. But Hillsie had a different view of matters. Two wickets in his opening over and final figures of 4 for 20 off his allotted overs says everything. With growing confidence came meticulous attention to detail. After being hit over mid off for a rare four, Hillsie set Brand back three paces. His next delivery was straight out of the textbook. Slightly more air, just a hint of turn, and a length that was enough to tempt the unwary. The ball sailed high into the sky for what seemed like an eternity. Brand adjusted, readjusted, sprung out his protractor, punched the readings furiously into his I Pad, and took the ball with a crisp calm. As the team celebrated in the middle, Brand allowed himself a more solitary reflection on his performance with a pee in the bushes. All done with a wry smile on his face.

Some spirited batting from the middle order came to an end with Buriton all out for 122, just short of their allotted 35 overs. Highlight in the field was undeniably Hillsie's low catch inches off the deck. It has been a long time since the great man got down that low.

There are two great certainties in life. The British ability to put on a great Royal Wedding and Dave's ability to put on a great match tea. Well three if you include nurses. The

spread, as ever, surpassed all expectations. Dave had even managed to outshine Pippa Middleton. Surely soon the Bedales food will carry the moniker "By Royal Appointment". It was with some reluctance that the team dragged themselves away from the scones and sandwiches. However, strict adherence to the macro biotic diet set for all players by Skip Chancellor for the winter break saw the coffee cake remain largely in tact.

For our batting the tale is a simple one. Bott and Stevens polished off the required runs in 20 overs, and carried their wickets- Bottie on a simply superb 86 and Stevens a dogged but beautifully crafted 39. It set the tone for the rest of the season. This team mean business.

And so in the same vein as I started, hopefully we can all look forward to next week and the return of West Meon and the chance to set the record straight after last year's disappointing result. As you question whether the hours of personal training between the games are worth the pain, reflect upon the following:

A guy is sitting at home when he hears a knock at the door. He opens the door and sees a snail on the porch. He picks up the snail and throws it as far as he can. Three years later, there's a knock on the door. He opens it and sees the same snail. The snail says "What the hell was that all about?"