

Many times over the last seven years have I opened up an email to read of the glowing exploits of aging warriors throwing back the onset of time to compete on the luscious green outfield of the Memorial pitch but there are times when these tales have as an historian caused me to question the accuracy of the perspective of the chronicler and so this year having experienced the first Sunday of summer I think it is timely that a different view record what was an intriguing and memorable fixture.

To record without bias the exploits of your team is a challenge at the best of times and as you will see when the result was as one-sided as this, poses a interesting conundrum. In the spirit of the Gentlemen's more prolific recorders the tendency might be to avoid the sport and focus instead on the peculiarities and traits of the players rather than their exploits but it is safe to say that some comment must be made of the classical authority of Truss that not only set the Staff off to a rapid accumulation but seemed to inspire a sense of urgency in his opening partner. That five fours were hastily dispatched to the boundary were not a surprise to anyone who has watched Gordon bat in the past. Neither too was the attention to preparing himself for each delivery, a passage of time that even Jonathan Trott would raise an eyebrow to. No the steady accumulation of well judged singles marked out an exemplary innings at a run a ball. Some fielders did question whether it would be possible for twos to be run too but fortunately Gordon has the measure of the Ferguson like banter of the arch competitor Petrie and both opening bats successfully saw the Staff off to a flyer, two horses safely back in the stable. Some promising debuts from Phil and Simon sandwiched by a speedy 25 from the Captain saw the arrival at the crease of the staff dandy Alan Wright. Despite statements protesting a lack of cricket and a surfeit of tennis, Alan certainly looked the part as he prepared to face his first ball. Never has a crowd and fielding side been so grateful for the gentlemanly presence of a free hit for each new batsmen in this fixture. A classically awful first shot was redeemed by some sweet strokeplay that saw the staff's fourth retiree back in the pavilion the score racing towards 150 and some ten overs to go. Cometh the hour cometh the man and the arrival of the Staff's very own Lion Ransi Jayatissa saw another change in run rate as a mighty two runs were accumulated with a mix of stout defence and aggression over a period of five overs. It is always foolish to speculate on what might have been but as the last of the staff debutants returned to the pavilion with the departure of Peter Thackrey, Gordon returned to the crease with five overs remaining there was a clear intent to push things on with another well judged quick single before the eagerly anticipated display of running between the wickets was unfortunately ended prematurely. Michael and Gordon saw the Staff to a very respectable 171 off their 25 overs and all the Gentleman and their entourage feasted on much needed afternoon tea.

There are a number of famous betrayals in sport and on the final afternoon of a forgettable Premiership it is perhaps worth pausing to consider the careers of players like Sol Campbell, Frank Stapleton, Robin Van Persie, Michael Owen and William Gallas all; of whom made the tricky decision to leave one great sporting institution to play for the other side. In the week that loyalty of club and individual to one another have finally come to an end with the retirement of Sir Alex it is perhaps then interesting to ponder the first such defection between the Gentleman that of our absent Director of Teaching and Learning. Whilst the fact that he is currently not teaching at the school might in some ways mitigate his crossing of the orchard building from the hallowed orchard to the heretical car park of the parents, it goes without saying that some of the more committed supporters of the Gentleman, the Gobbers, might not be so forgiving. I suppose like all betrayals it comes down to the relative success that is then enjoyed. Liverpool fans have long forgiven Michael

moving to Manchester, less so the very successful Sol Campbell for his move across North London. The Arsenal are probably even proud of what Robin has achieved this year. The staff of Bedales to their credit applauded Al out, watched in awe at some of the most expansive air shots seen by the Gentleman for some years and marvelled at the contrasting run rate. Unhelpfully handicapped by the removal of his dashing opening partner David Harvey by a quite unsporting piece of reactive one handed catching at square leg, Al didn't really get going and before the parents reached the halfway point of their innings the heart of their batting order was back in the pavilion. Dave Hills and Tim Wise have over the years seen their team out of a number of tricky situations and having dug in to rebuild some stability to the middle order things looked set for a tense conclusion. Thackrey King Shaw and Truss had stifled the parents. Ten overs to go and a hundred runs needed, Petrie silenced on the sidelines where would this contest go next?

As renowned for their words as for their deeds, the combined ranks of the Gentleman of Bedales stood back open mouthed as a lethal combination of verbal and physical GOBery erupted following a rather innocuous if arguably slightly wide delivery was bowled by Ransi. David had already showed in his opening stand with Al the patience and technique to see off this broadside, but even seasoned Gentleman could not fail to be impressed by his unflappable firmness and strength in seeing off the fiery Jayatissa. For the past few years men as brave and bold as Murray Chancellor and Dicky Dale have quaked at the prospect of facing a full speed assault from one of the mild mannered Jayatissa boys in this fixture. The speed of Asith and height of Chatura have caused many a sleepless night but nothing compared to the fire of the head of the pride. Gordon Dale commented after on the deep swirling pits of magma he had seen seething in his Physics department colleague's eyes but even that fails to do justice to the sustained rage of a wronged Ransi. Delivery after delivery of focused hostility the likes of which this country has not witnessed since the days of Ambrose and Walsh ensued as Ransi rolled back the years showing an athleticism and energy unseen since his famous dropped catch off a no ball at Lurgashall five seasons ago. Competitiveness is something present in the heart of all Gentlemen of Bedales but this was too much for some of us to take. Hills succumbed, Wise senior retired and then his son David returned to the pavilion. Not even Chancellor and Petrie could really threaten despite some lusty blows off the returning Dale the damage had been done by a wounded Lion five overs before. In the words of Sir Alex, the noisy neighbours, worthy victors last season, have been put back in their place for another year by a wiley campaigner the likes of which we will probably not see again. Some fires never go out and on a day when no one was LBW I think we all now know to never call Ransi for a wide. Not even in a friendly between Gentlemen.