

A Tale of Two Umpires

The Jolly Tanners v. The French House

At a time when the world (excluding the USA) is obsessed with the football world cup a venue where referees are subjected to vivid abuse for their decisions. It is worth remembering that there remain two field sports where respect for the officials is sacrosanct, namely rugby and cricket. Well all that changed on Sunday 25 August 2006.

Names have been changed to protect the guilty, the innocent and the stupid.

March 2006 – Jolly Tanners Management Meeting.

Geoff Crosta presents the year's fixtures pointing out that the game against the French House will have to start early due to the probability that England could be playing in the world that day. Ron thinks 'What foresight'. Andrew thinks 'What world cup?'.

11 a.m. Sunday 25 August 2006. The day of the match.

Ron arrives in his Sunday best replete in the composed calm of church and his usual bonhomie. Having greeted and thanked all those there for attending he goes home to change. Thus innocently starting an incrementally disastrous sequence of events.

11.15 a.m. same day.

On realising that the opposition are probably going to be late Andrew initiates a little practice in the nets. Lately he has not been able to hit a stationary ball let alone one that might have momentum.

11.20 a.m.

Andrew realises that the driver of the car that has been circling the common for 10 minutes is stood on the other side of the net. With out introduction or invitation, and in the manor of a jobsworth car park attendant accusing you of parking your car in the wrong place, on his foot, he launches into a tirade of ungrounded assertions, irrational questions and undeliverable demands. Andrew introduces himself and asks the gentleman who he is. Several times.

Eventually he says he is the French House umpire. At which point Andrew blanches. He has a well founded reputation for arguing with umpires and here he is remonstrating with one before play had begun. Before the opposition had arrived. Before he'd had a drink.

Noon

Rattled, Andrew goes to the bar (some things are easily resolved), buys the team a drink and wonders why he had not taken the advice of a passerby, who stopped to watch the one sided altercation, and hit the agent provocateur. 'It's not cricket' became Andrew's mantra.

12.30 p.m.

Ron returns mutely dressed in shorts & polo shirt. Is informed of what he has missed and declares that we are providing all the umpires we need.

1.00 p.m.

The opposition arrive as drunk as they are late and agree to bat first. Their umpire argues with them.

He insists on umpiring and joins the prematch rule discussion. This quick meeting defines the game's format and the grounds for dismissal which for us excludes lbws (if you read last year's report for this fixture you will understand why).

This does not go down well with their umpire who launches into another pompous, self righteous rant about his abilities and experience. Andrew rises to this bluster informing him that if he does not like the rules (he is alone in this) it will be fine by all if he does not umpire.

Ron pours oil on the moment and leaves Andrew to lead his team into the middle.

Andrew does not do, serious, team talks but on this occasion implores his players to let all that has passed pass and reminds them that this is pub cricket and should be played as such.

1.30 p.m.

Play begins.

1.40 p.m.

The French House have lost two wickets. Both should have been disallowed by the square leg umpire for potentially being above the batsman's waste. In the absence of a negative call from his co-umpire Ron raises the finger.

2.30 p.m.

The French House are all out for 66. Their umpire has continues to endear himself to no one especially the scorer whom he has harassed throughout.

2.40 p.m.

Following an unusually quick turn round the Jolly Tanners begin their innings and soon find out that the opposition has brought bowlers not batsmen. Or at least that they have sobered up. The jolly Tanners are soon reduced to their weaker batsmen who struggle to score runs.

The tension in the pavilion mounts.

@ 3.15 p.m.

The Jolly Tanners are still playing poorly. The tension has not abated. Their umpire is still berating the scorer and those that are helplessly watching (i.e. players who have been dismissed) have had enough such that when their umpire demands the score board be updated, by shouting and scowling at the scorer, they tell him where to go.

Ron apologises to the umpire.

Andrew asks for calm in the pavilion.

3.45 p.m.

The Jolly Tanners win for the first time in two years. It does not feel like it.

3.50 p.m.

Ron berates Andrew about the poor behaviour on the boundary. Andrew agrees it was wrong, that it was suppressed and, childishly, that there were mitigating circumstances.

3.53 p.m.

Ron claims it was not a victory because the French House were not really cricketers. Andrew asks if losing would have still been a loss.

3.55 p.m.

Ron claims that the Jolly Taners could not have lost as Andrew would have seen them home, as he had held him self back to bat last.

Andrew thinks Ron is delirious.

4.30 p.m.

In the Tanners the French House ask those between them and the television to clear their view of it. Their umpire espouses his own counter commentary to no one in particular and Andrew has established that said umpire is, apparently, all right once you get to know him.

Andrew talks to his wife.

5.30 p.m.

The French House captain asks for a rematch in Staplefield. Geoff immediately says, without consulting the fixture list, that there are no vacant Sundays. Ron thinks 'What foresight'. Andrew thinks 'What there's another world cup'.

Mr. E. Solved

Cricket Correspondent to the Jolly Tanners

Champagne Moments

We won.

Never seeing that umpire again. Consider it a vintage to be laid down.

Beer Moments

The poisonous atmosphere that affected all and our response to it.

An Umpire of the Vanities Production



DOG DAY AFTERNOONS