

On Wednesday 23rd May a plucky TWM team took to the cricket field at Blackheath CC to play in the second annual "firm v club" fixture. TWM became shirt sponsors for Blackheath CC back in April 2017 and after a surprisingly (for all concerned) close fought match in 2017, expectations were high for the rematch. Unfortunately TWM had lost a few key players in the off-season, however, there were no shortage of volunteers willing to fill the void and brush-off their primary school knowledge of the game (even if their pads didn't fit anymore).

With the weather looking decidedly gloomy and showers forecast later in the evening, a mutual decision was made to shorten the game from the popular 20/20 over format to the less traditional 16/16 overs (a format the ECB will no doubt pilot in the coming years). TWM won the toss and elected to bowl first. TWM had high hopes that the overcast weather conditions would suit its five pronged pace attack of Powell, Forrest, Miller, Foulger, and Hitchcock, and the team took to the field, led by Captain David Powell, filled with energy.

Although occasionally erratic as one would expect for the first game of the season, TWM's bowlers put in a very admirable effort, sending bullet after bullet down the track. Of the opening attack, Jonny Forrest's pace proved too much for some (even if he did have a golf ball related injury) and Powell's pin-point accuracy managed to apply early pressure to Blackheath's batsmen. However, realising they needed to get a move on, Blackheath started to open up and any wayward balls were soon being dispatched to the boundary mercilessly. First change bowler Charlie Miller put in another excellent display with the ball after his success last season, consistently bowling a challenging line and length. Caroline Foulger, our wicket taking machine from 2017's various games, tested the Blackheath batsmen's technique and was unlucky to not get a wicket. David Hitchcock, having never bowled a cricket ball before but having shown exceptional promise in the nets 20 minutes before the game, fearlessly agreed to an over, which after some early looseners, demonstrated great promise and vindicated the selectors' faith in him; a star for the future.

Cricket games are often won or lost on the quality of the fielding and TWM put in another spirited performance chasing every ball down and attacking the stumps at every opportunity. If the game had been filmed, TWM would have had an action-packed highlights reel filled with acrobatics, the occasional slip, and a wicketkeeper performing "the worm"/a flailing fish whilst trying to gather the ball for a run out. Alas, despite best efforts, Blackheath posted a strong total of 119-2 after their 16 overs.

To chase such a total, TWM would need to ensure they got off to a solid start to their innings. Instead, a top order collapse ensued with the loss of 3 wickets in the first 2 overs for 8 runs. Undeterred, Captain Powell put in a Tendulkar-esque masterclass, maintaining his cool and keeping the scoreboard ticking over. Despite the top-order's failings, the middle-to-lower order batsmen stood fast, providing the much needed support Powell required if we were to get anywhere close to Blackheath's total. Special mention should go to Richard Bullen, Stuart Downey, Simon Burdett-Dixon, and David Taylor for showing guts with the bat despite their lack of experience.

TWM's total gradually rose until Powell, attempting to dance down the wicket to send the ball hurtling back over the bowler's head into one of the neighbour's kitchens, was out clean bowled. An unfortunate end to what was a TWM CC record individual score of 77 runs. Nevertheless, the batting line-up remained resolute and the final wicket partnership of Robin Bunce and Caroline Foulger persevered to see out our full allotment of overs, TWM finishing on 109-9.

The game over, both teams and their supporters sat down to drinks and a BBQ as the sun set over the delightful Blackheath setting. Even in defeat, it is a pleasure to play at such a beautiful ground and to see everyone in such good spirits enjoying the early summer evening. Special thanks to our hosts Blackheath CC for providing another great BBQ and for gamely putting out a team, even if the opposition may not have been up to normal standards. Thank you also to all those TWMers who took part, especially those who lacked experience of the game, and in particular thank you to our band of small but dedicated supporters who turned out to cheer (and occasionally laugh at) the team.

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