

Chris Hora Memorial Game Programme

Welcome to this cricket match in memory of Chris Hora, founder member of Orpington Cricket Club and creator of the Life Membership scheme for former players and social members of the club. For those of you not familiar with Chris, a few words about him as a person and as a player. He first came to the club in 1971 under the auspices of the newly formed Orpington Sports Club, a club with initially one Sunday first X1 playing in Goddington Park next door until the new ground was completed in 1972. Henry Cooper was duly invited to open the new facilities and having completed the formalities, spent the afternoon getting well and truly trashed with Chris and fellow colleagues.

'Being social' was a major part of Chris's cricketing life! Sunday mornings at home were always eventful as the full extent of the previous night's excesses were well and truly documented. Memorable escapades included walking up a brand new concrete path that his Father and Brothers-in-law had laid the day before which meant big size 12 footprints throughout. Mistaking Gill's wardrobe for the en suite bathroom, and getting Paul Hemple breathalysed on the way home from Cuaco! The infamous race home from Gravesend with him driving the Mercedes and David Heron in the Granada is legendary and the record still stands at 17 minutes. On tour with Terry Markell, they changed all the road signs in the Monmouth villages, forget how they started and ended up sleeping in the car! Convoys to cricket were always eventful – Chris in the lead car could always be relied upon to indicate right and turn left, go round roundabouts three times before exiting and travel across three lanes of motorway traffic to exit the M25. He would regularly hide in front of big lorries and deliberately find small country lanes to execute three point turns for all!

As a cricketer, it was always more about crease time than run rate. Accusations of boring were probably reasonable but he would argue his job was to see off the openers and he regularly scored fifties, particularly at Marlborough 1870! He only ever scored one hundred - at LESSA, the old London Electricity ground. Those who knew him well will smile wryly at the new net facility being named in his honour. There were probably more sightings of Lord Lucan in the seventies than of Chris in the nets, but he was always the first with his hand in his pocket when contributions were required to the cost of providing things, for example the new scoreboard – and years later, having been a huge advocate of colts cricket, he was instrumental in developing the OCC Life Membership Scheme by funding a reunion dinner for all former players. A night which will be remembered by all for a long time to come, even though he was too ill that night to really appreciate his achievement.

As a result of the dinner, the funding that was accrued from memberships enabled the club to train more coaches, fund development opportunities for our colts and last year, we achieved solid progress with most teams either winning their League or coming runners up. The Saturday first X1 were promoted undefeated – a feat that was magnificent and may not be repeated. Rumours that a cardboard cut out of Chris sitting in his wheelchair with his customary fish and chips and pint of beer - willing the boys on, were hugely denied by all. When his will was opened, there were strict instructions that his ashes were to be buried on the pitch at the point where Neil Bradford commenced his run up. A service was duly held, led by Paul Schmidt and attended by many playing and social members of the club.

Today is about remembering a proper cricketing man. Somebody who genuinely loved all forms of the game, the banter, the socialising, especially the socialising!! , the WAGs, the camaraderie, competitiveness, the singing, the WAGS !!! the daft episodes that can only happen within clubs. He loved the lairy shirt nights at the club, played golf in his latter years when the knees gave way and cricket was abandoned and could be relied upon to take anybody on at pool with a Harvey Wallbanger in his hand. Kel on the other hand could be relied upon to be lurking in the car park ready to take his keys off him to prevent him driving home!

He played table tennis for Kent and England and would have loved to watch today's competition, provided of course that Stockbridge didn't win it, as he has every year since about 1982! He loved the singing of the Orpington songs, some of which I'm sure we will hear later, and he would have been truly humbled that so many friends have turned out to play in a game in his honour.

There are people playing today that have a particular connection with Chris. Robbo – our Chairman, who Chris thought had done a magnificent job in driving the club forward and who worked with him to get the Life Membership Scheme off the ground. Rich de Mel who Chris thought was an exceptional talent and lovely guy – 'a son any man could be proud of'. Wonder if Chandra thinks the same when he gets the call at 4.30am to pick him up (literally) from The Reflex, Tiger Tiger etc. 'He chucks to the left.....' George Fuller, one of our younger participants did not meet Chris but is a Millwall man just the same. He too could have been bored silly with stories of the Lions glory days – the days of Harry Cripps, Alf Wood and a punch up on the wasteground behind the old den on a Saturday afternoon!! The opposition have one or two surprises up their sleeves too!!

Today is an auspicious occasion for another reason. Our beloved Goochie is leaving us for shores down under. How will we cope without the King of the Rainbow Children? Will we ever see his OCC jacket again and can Pies now take over the record for sinking blue WKD and Guinness in one sitting? He will be living the dream of course but how will the rest of us cope? Goochie – we wish you health, happiness, fun but above all the promise of a return in the near future for Yamma's wedding!! Chris would have thoroughly approved of his leaving drinks co-inciding and the near carnage that will inevitably follow!!!

The two Captains – Paul Hemple and Sam Denly, are an excellent and very fitting choice . Paul is a former Captain of the OCC, heading up the Saturday first team during a very successful period in the 80s. Chris always said he was the best Captain he ever played under, fiercely competitive, always motivating his team and a big supporter of encouraging the colts to make their breakthrough in first team cricket. He is still playing at a ripe age your Editor will not reveal and I know that Chris really envied his ability to keep going and his bowling talent that is still as effective today. He elected to become a Life Member in his own right at last year's Annual Dinner. Whether Sue will bring the kinky green boots that Chris was so fond of remains to be seen but rumour has it she's still got them!!

Sam knew Chris through the regular League games that he played against Orpington – always managing to score runs including a ton in 2008 that Chris reckoned was the best that he had ever seen at the ground by an opposition player, (we all got a bit blasé about tons watching Hari and Sanjay Patel) but Chris thought that Sam's 100 was elegant and classy. He's a very nice guy but does tend to get his football and cricket a bit mixed up, so there are occasions when a stump can get booted quite a long way and Stockers would be well advised to give him wide berth at the crease when umpiring today.

They have chosen their teams to get a good balance of youth, experience, batting, bowling, drinking capacity and singing voices and there are bound to be challenges later on that lie outside cricket. You have been warned!! However, the whole day should be in keeping with Chris's love of the game, the people, the competition and the banter. The Sir Frank Plankton award being presented and Benfair's fines should all add to the fun of the occasion. A very big thank you to everyone who has given their time, energy and enthusiasm to make this day a success and enjoyable for all.