

1st XI – Saturday 20th May – OCC win by 2 wickets

Catford & Cyphers 145-8 (50ovs)

OCC 146-8 (47.2ovs)

After the disappointment of last week, the OCC 1's faced the prospect of a trip to Catford and Cyphers. The Kent League's own version of a trip to Tony Pulis' Stoke on a cold, wet, windy Tuesday night. Whilst it was not quite a 'must win' at this early stage of the season, it certainly was an important game.

Captain Robinson reverted to type, and duly lost the toss. Catford unsurprisingly wasted no time at all in electing to bat. The wicket looked much better than it had done in previous years, but unfortunately played exactly the same, offering about as much bounce as the Greek economy.

Dom and Ben bowled the first 30 overs between them, and the score at that stage was 57/5 – giving an indication as to just how difficult the pitch was to bat on. Ben incredibly did not manage to pick up a wicket, but Dom took full advantage. He bowled with good pace, and excellent control, and picked up his maiden 5 wicket haul in the 1st team (15-0-29-5). Some more tight bowling followed from Rich, Village and Hayden, before the Catford number 9 chanced his arm and hit some incredibly clean strikes. He scored 56 in very quick time, to take Catford up to 145-8 at the end of their 50 overs. The Catford opener was dismissed for a score of 48 in the 48th over, giving us a very clear indication of the 2 different ways there were to try and bat on this wicket! The deck certainly got a bit easier to bat on, but 145 was still a touch too high, on another day we would/should have killed the game off and bowled Catford out for under 100.

As with any chase, a good start was necessary. Openers Lessey and George provided just that as we sat pretty at 33-0 after 6. We would take 33-0 after 6 batting at The Oval, let alone the pitch that we were playing on! Unfortunately we seem to have a habit of giving wickets away, just when we have the opposition there for the taking. Through not a great deal of fault of his own, Lessey was adjudged LBW to a shooter, and George followed a couple of overs later, skying a hugely ambitious lofted straight drive after once again doing 'all the hard work'. Rich, on his return after a mid-season romantic weekend away, was somehow run out a couple of overs later by a fielder who was clearly injured and could barely walk, let alone run – the fruits of love must have been clouding his mind still, another cheap wicket given away. For the third week in a row, Rat and Robbo steadied the ship. Scoring was not quick, but it was a much needed partnership as they chipped away with the odd single and a 2 here and there. Rat eventually departed, offering no shot to a ball that hit halfway up his off stump, and Mike was run out by a superb piece of fielding a few overs later. Ben came in, hit 'shot of the day' for 4 through the covers, and then was bowled by one that kept a bit low. This brought in young James, playing only his fifth 1st XI league game, still with 36 to win. Showing experience beyond his years, he and Robbo put on a good partnership to get us within 16 runs of the target. Robbo's final score of 36 might not sound much, but in the context of the game and the conditions, it was worth at least double that. His fantastic innings was brought to an abrupt end, unluckily LBW to umpire Penfold on a ball where he was well forward, and probably outside the line (a decision he would later be 'thanked' for). This brought in Dom, who perished going for the glory shot first ball. We were then relying on Village, in his first knock in 9 months. It didn't show, as he was calm and picked off the runs on offer with James. A couple of Chinese cuts for crucial runs were good moments, and two LBW shouts were turned down to the skiddy Catford bowler as we drew closer to the target. An extremely tense run chase reached its climax when James edged late cut a full toss through third man. The 2 runs were completed, and a roar instantly followed from the players watching from the side. An excellent chase and win in very difficult conditions. Plenty of high 5's and big smiles afterwards, on to next week!