

## CHATSWORTH DEMOLISHED BY GARGOYLES



It is always the match to play in and to have your friends and family see you play in. And so it was on Sunday, that in front of by far the biggest crowd of the season, Alstonefield CC took on the mighty Chatsworth CC in view of the glistening edifice and thousands of onlookers. It is a form of cricketing paradise, to step out of the thatched pavilion onto the freshly mown turf and look up at the magnificent Cavendish home as the herds of sheep migrate along the adjacent hillside to follow the sun's rays. The toss was won and Gargoyles' captain Andy Bray had no hesitation in batting first.

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What he couldn't have anticipated was a boomerang of a first ball of the innings from Chatsworth's Derbyshire U17 fast bowler Maiden, which rather shattered the bucolic tranquility by way of his stumps. Batting was not going to be a walk in this park. The wicket was slow and then even slower and bounce appeared random. Faced with these conditions, the last thing on the menu should be needless run outs, but Jon Lane and Neil Shotton both found themselves in the middle of the wicket. Shotton perished.

Jon Lane had once again blunted the new ball with faultless defensive technique, compiling a dogged 8 off 25 balls, before falling lbw and John Curry found Chatsworth captain Pack's pace too much.

29 for 4 off 15 overs.



**Liam Duffy top scored against Chatsworth**

Liam Duffy at number four had been assimilating all the information he needed to put his batting plan together. Restraint, a stubborn refusal to let the wicket get him out, but staying alert to punish bad balls. Joined by Harry Jones at 38 for 5 in the 18<sup>th</sup> over, these two wise heads set about staying out in the middle for as long as possible and take the runs available. In 16 overs they had put on 48 runs, when Duffy fell to the dangerous Pack for a top score 39. There was some energy in the tail, with determined running between the wickets and the last 5 overs yielded 24 runs. 110 for 9 after 40 overs felt 25 to 30 runs light. But, as a delightful tea was taken it was obvious there was a sense of anticipation and confidence in the Gargoyle ranks that they had the bowlers, fielders and the appetite for the job.

Defending only 110 and with 40 overs available puts enormous pressure on the opening bowlers. A fast start by Chatsworth and the belief ebbs away all too quickly. So 5 without loss after 6 overs was a formidable marker laid down by Shahid Ali and Tony Guest. There were not going to be easy runs, pressure had been exerted and batsmen knew they had to take risks to keep up with even this low run rate. Changes at both ends and Liam Duffy struck in his first over, bowling Maiden all ends up. Pack, the Chatsworth captain announced himself with two powerful drives to the boundary, but at the other end Jackson was mistiming a drive straight into Tony Guest's safe hands to give Duffy his second wicket. The hard hitting Gaskell joined his captain and it was clear these were the batsmen who could change the course of the game. In an inspired move, Ali changed ends and immediately had Gaskell's stumps splayed. 25 for 3 after 13 overs. Gargoyles' captain Bray was constantly juggling his attack and brought Ian McKay on to rattle through some overs and build pressure. Six balls later, Pack and Doxey were back in the thatched hutch. Two McKay overs later, White and Stasi were back with them, both bowled. 43 for 7 was a remarkable performance from the Gargoyles.



**Extremely rare footage of Neil Shotton taking a catch**

However, one that pales in comparison to an individual piece of totally unexpected and, as records show, unprecedented, fielding brilliance from Neil Shotton. Five wicket hauls in 40 over matches are rare and McKay wasn't holding his breath when Doxey senior lobbed a mistimed drive towards mid off. The trajectory was initially high, but dropping. Mid off was Shotton, strategically placed there on account of the hamstring injury which had prevented his self-styled gazelle like interventions at fine leg. So the portents were not good, especially when it was obvious he needed to be two yards further back. With one belief-suspending Korbutesque leap, complete with a double arch twist to the left and rear, the ball was plucked from its orbit by his right hand and an elegant landing ensued. Quite rightly, the celebrations that followed, focused on this astonishing feat of virtuosity, while McKay quietly finished his 5 wickets for 18 spell.



**Ian McKay - 5 wicket haul**

As these things do, Shotton's moment of transfixing inspiration proved contagious. Wicketkeeper Howlett had played an intelligent innings full of energy and skill, but when on 28 he clearly didn't anticipate a brilliant pick up and direct hit by Bray at mid off, as he sauntered for a never to be completed single.

78 for 9 with 10 overs remaining.

This is where Bray's calculations had to be precise. Nash and Hill were well capable of nudging 3 runs an over and securing the win. Duffy and Ali, who had both bowled magnificently with economy rates of just under two per over, were back on but running out of overs. With the score moving into the 90s, tension was moving from adrenalin-inducing to nervous edginess. Crucially the Gargoyles' fielding had been exemplary throughout. Steve King, John Curry and Andy Farmer, supported their bowlers and kept the pressure on the batsmen by attacking the ball on the ground and saving countless singles.

**On more than one occasion this season, this reporter has commented on the Gargoyles' palpable belief in a teammate's ability to deliver, whatever the match situation. The Wootton and Abbots Bromley games were prime examples. And so it was at Chatsworth. In the 36<sup>th</sup> over with the score on 99, Nash straight drove Guest powerfully and probably thought he had just reduced the deficit to 7. Instead Guest bravely intercepted with both hands and clutched the ball to his chest. Nash distraught on his haunches, Gargoyles basking in the golden evening sun and one of those glorious days that define a summer.**

**ALSTONEFIELD CC 110 FOR 9 BEAT CHATSWORTH CC 99 ALL OUT BY 11 RUNS**