

Tilford CC vs Hetairoi CC at Tilford, Sunday 9th August 2026

Or how to lose a cricket match....

Justin said during the game that Tilford are the opposition we have our worst record against, and after this game one can see why.

The sad thing was that we were really a better team than them, and at times played very well. But they were much more canny.

Well first it must be observed that this was the driest pitch and ground I have ever seen in England. The ground as a whole showed not a blade of green, but the pitch was really just a dust bowl, with only some very dry grass left in the middle of the wicket. In addition to that there is of course the famous configuration on the village green, with two squares and, for our game on the second square, the shortest boundary I have ever played on, about 25m to the boundary behind the keeper at one end. This all made it hard to judge a reasonable score, as one over could easily go for eight to twelve runs at that end.

So the first error, perhaps crucial, was to lose the toss. It was a lovely summer's day, but it was, once again, hot...Tilford elected to bat first, and subject us to the heat. However even with Jasper Brewer injured we had possibly our strongest front four bowling attack of the season. Indeed, everybody in the side bowled except for your scribe. We had no regular wicket-keeper, but Justin did a sterling job as a part-timer.

Fergus Neve opened up from the river end, and the second ball swung and kept low to castle their younger opener. In fact one odd thing about the wicket was how it tended to keep very low for the faster bowlers but often bounced prodigiously for the slow bowlers.

At the other end Simon Evans bowled an excellent line and length and kept Tilford completely in check. 7 for 1 after six overs. A couple of fours followed. Then Fergus did get one to bounce and cut in, taking the batsman's glove, but Justin diving to his left could not hang on. However in his sixth over Fergus produced two more excellent deliveries which again kept low and bowled two more batsmen.

Callum McCarthy took over from Simon and bowling at three quarter pace proved a good option, though it was the result of sore thighs from the day before. He too was extremely accurate. John Megone took over from Fergus and in a short spell of three overs had the batsmen playing and missing regularly. Meanwhile at the other end some excellent fielding by Jasper cutting off runs at point eventually led to frustration and a heave to be clean bowled by Callum. 25 for 4. Our intelligence reported that the number six was a big hitter, and he did start to attempt the long handle to John, hitting one four, but then he miscued and was nicely caught by Peter Beck at extra cover to give John a well deserved wicket. About 35 for 5 off eighteen overs.

As noted, the Hetairoi had ten bowlers available, though one, Justin, kept wicket, and people had travelled a long way to play down in deepest Surrey. But it was in any case time for spin. John Ball came on at the river end, as his leg spin would turn away from the bat towards the long uphill boundary. He at once got remarkable bounce and turn. At the other end Peter Beck settled in to a nice six over spell of off spin.

The Tilford number 5 had a support group watching from the pub. He played very carefully at first, with some lucky plays and misses, but when he hit Peter for a lofted four over mid off, his first shot in anger, the support group raised a hearty cheer. His partner at the other end nudged a four to the extremely short boundary but was largely marooned without runs. However there was an interlude in the fall of wickets. But in Peter's third and fourth overs he managed to produce some nice turn, and low bounce to bowl both seven and eight, and Tilford were about 60 for 7.

It is unfortunate, to put it mildly, that the remaining batsmen then managed 73 runs. The number five was playing very sensibly now, avoiding the sharply turning balls from John Ball, and hitting the bad balls to the short onside boundary. Number 9 stuck with him for a while until he tried to hit a shorter ball off John B to leg and was well caught by John Megone running in from deep midwicket. It was about 80 for 8.

Number ten was a fourteen or fifteen year old. The field came in but he danced down the wicket to make a John Ball ball a full toss and evaded the despairing dive at mid-off to register a four. He could bat.

Number 5 had given one chance hitting a half tracker from Peter very hard to Simon's right at mid wicket. It looked as if it had stuck but then dropped to the floor.

We still had bowlers in need of a chance to participate. Stephen was not at his best. John Ball was still bowling well, but could not get the breakthrough. The last eight overs were expensive including one that went for at least fifteen.

I had thought that anything over 100 might be competitive. But the ninth wicket partnership pushed them over that. John Ball got the youngster to glove one to the keeper (and walk, which was nice to see). Then Andrew Wilson got the last wicket.

Their number 5 had reached fifty to a hearty cheer from his support group. He left the pitch undefeated to another hearty cheer. His sensible innings in a difficult situation was to prove the difference between the sides.

They had reached 133. I was worried it might prove too much, and having had them at 35 for 5 we should not have let them get so many. But most thought we had the batting to get home, especially with that very short boundary.

Our innings was the inverse of theirs. I had told the opening bats, Simon E and John M, that I did not care about the runs I just wanted them both to be there after twenty overs to give the rest of us a rest after the heat. However at the end of the second over we

were 22 for 0. The first ball of the third nearly cleaned up Simon, but after the second ball of the third we were 26 for 0. Then Simon hit a full toss to point who took a good low catch. Out for 17. And so it began.

Tilford had opened with a medium pacer (who took that first wicket), and an off spinner who took an over or two to find his line and length, but then got in the groove.

I departed to put pads on, and cool off in the relative shade of the changing rooms, after the first wicket, so missed the next two events. Apparently we were 49 for 1 in the sixth over. I am told that Callum put his foot down the wicket and attempted to hit the spinner over mid off, but instead hit him straight to mid off. Out for 11. This brought Fergus to the wicket at 49 for 2. The medium pacer was replaced by the young leg spinner. On a pitch with variable bounce John M then tried to sweep him in his first over and top edged to be caught. Out for 11. 49 for 3.

So Chris M emerged to bat in the sixth over, not after twenty overs of rest and cool as requested! He hit the young leggie over mid on for four and then used his feet to hit a full toss through mid off to the very short boundary. Fergus and he had a conversation about batting long. The first ball of the next over from the off-spinner Fergus timed his push nicely, but played with a straight leg, and chipped straight to a diving mid-on. 57 for 4. Jasper came in, a good striker of the ball but prone to youthful impatience, so I was told. So he was facing a challenging situation.

Chris M was finding the leg spinner manageable. They are always easier for left handers to play. Jasper was playing the off spinner who was now bowling well. His defence to the bouncing ball needed slightly softer hands, so the fielders closed in. Then a short ball and he pulled it to a stretching square leg, who could not hang on, and it ran away for four. Then a nice straight drive for four. But then a half-hearted drive, and it was straight to mid-off. 68 for 5. John Ball came in, recovering from his ten over spell. But it was still only the tenth over!! So much for a rest from the heat.

He and Chris needed to drop anchor, and with their experience they might have been expected to do so. But Chris's head was addled with the heat, it seems, or not enough cricket this season. Facing the off spinner's sixth over he first of all found himself heaving outside of, f and just escaping point's grasp. But then on the last ball of that same over, not learning his lesson, he jumped down the wicket and was stumped. Madness. Out for 13. 73 for 6.

Retiring to the pavilion, I missed the next two dismissals. But I gather that Andrew W chipped to mid-off, and that John Ball tried to defend a bouncing ball and poked a catch to somewhere. When I came back, we were about 78 for 8. Justin Abel hit a two and a single and then charged the leg spinner to be stumped (or bowled?), leaving us 81 for 9. Stephen Matthews and Peter Beck then put on eighteen for the last wicket, to show us

what could have been, before Stephen gave a return catch and we were all out 99. 49 for 1, 99 all out. That's right.

OK, it was not an easy wicket. The young bowler was decent, the older off spinner was canny. But come on, we should have got 85 more runs from being 49 for 1. Our dismissals were eight caught, most at mid-off or mid-on, one stumped, and one stumped or bowled. We were hardly dismissed, we got ourselves out.

It seems we have thrown away one or two games this season. This was certainly another one.

The Tilford hospitality was lovely as always. Very good tea in the Barley Mow and a lovely drink afterwards before the five hour journey back to York.

Simon Brewer very kindly umpired the whole match which was a huge help on a hot day.

Ah well, it's only a game, and at least everyone had a go.

CM 11.8.26