

Lynchmere's tradition is to tour France every second year, pandemics notwithstanding. As 2023 is not a French year, our fixtures secretary attempts to get us as close as we can to France without actually crossing the channel. On this occasion we were at Goring by Sea, to play the Pathfinder side. I suppose if your town shared its name with the Luftwaffe high command, you'd choose to name your team after an Ordnance Survey map instead.

Pathfinder's ground is impressive with two sets of permanent nets and a pleasant view to the south Downs and Arun valley, and with the smells and sound of the sea. They play cricket the right way, giving a full role to several enthusiastic teens as well as mix of ages,

Skipper Deacon opted to bat in our 35 over game. On a warm day which threatened rain, the pitch promised an even balance between bat and ball.

Dan Giles, in his first match for Lynchmere, and Adam Hedges in his 461st, opened the batting and got us to a quick start, taking 10 from Oakley-Birds first over and reaching 29 by the end of the fourth over. But after a maiden, Giles mistimed one from Reimoser and was adjudged LBW. In came McGlynn fresh off a 50 at Elsted, and the exciting pace continued.

But Oakley Bird got his revenge bowling Hedges and in the next three overs he had Ben Clarke caught for 1 and bowled Dave Hains for 3, to finish his opening spell with a very creditably 3-25.

McGlynn was joined by Deacon at 49-4, and they played effectively but respectfully against the youngsters Charlie Sparrow and James Fryer, a Sussex U-13 leg spinner. At 73-4 in the 23rd over, McGlynn mistimed a drive to Sumpter, another youngster, at mid-off.

This brought new recruit Ed Cottrell to the crease, and he kept Deacon good company as they put on a further 41 runs. When Sumpter bowled Cottrell, Deacon was in his late thirties and the job of the remaining batters was to keep him company whilst he scored runs. Brown Sr traded singles with him. Keeper Mark Haggart was keen for a stumping off Fryer's bowling, but he needed Brown to move his feet whilst batting, something that hasn't happened for a very long time.

When Groves came on with some accurate pace, Brown was bowled bringing in Ed "the Shed" hedges, who kept captain company for another ten runs. Haggart M did stump the Shed off Fryer's bowling.

This brought in Tim Knight, who played one of Lynchmere's better 1-run innings. One might say Knight played Leach to Deacon's Stokes, though it is Tom Deacon who bats with spectacles. Deacon went through his repertoire to pass a well-earned 50 and on to 60. The pair had put on 24 by the time Grove hit timber again to remove Knight.

No 11 Aaron Brown survived long enough to Deacon to get to 66 before being bowled by Tom Wilkins. 157 in 33 overs was a decent score and set up a tight match.

Cottrell opened the bowling and acting umpire Wilkins adjudged opener Mark Haggart LBW without score on his third ball. The batter struggled fully to conceal his disappointment.

Lynchmere's tactics were to keep the runs tight. Ben Clarke did this superbly, conceding only 11 runs in his six overs. Paul Fryer pulled a muscle and had to retire hurt, bringing in Iain Haggart to accompany McNamara. The latter tried to get on top of Cottrell, so Deacon brought in McGlynn. This seemed an inspired move, as on his second ball, McNamara misjudged the length and chipped a catch above the head of Deacon, who has well earned his reputation as one of our best catchers. In his third over, McGlynn bowled Jamie Reimoser and had Ollie Sumpter caught behind by Ed Hedges. Overall Hedges junior had an very promising game behind the stumps.

At 49-4 after 13 overs, with a question over Fryer's return, it was all to play for. Patherfinder were a little behind the run rate, now needing above 5 an over. Haggart (1) had played himself in, Charlie Sparrow is technically capable and very good on his leg side. Deacon called on Brown and Giles to stem the flow. The field was set to deny singles, the plan being to force the age gap to affect running between the wickets. Both slow bowlers did their job, tying Sparrow up outside the off stump and denying Haggart runs from his strong area in the covers. The required rate started nudging up towards 6.

It was clear that the game would be won or lost here, in a classic one-day cricket game of chess. If Haggart stayed in with partners, 6 an over would not be a challenge. But Lynchmere's best chances would be either to get Haggart out, or to deny him strike and keep removing the partners.

Three chances from Haggart's bat went begging some harder than others. Recognising it as a game of chess, Knight was brought on and continued the effort to keep it tight.

It was only on Brown's penultimate ball that he finally broke through, removing Sparrow's off stump with a 'carrom' ball. New batsman Wilkins was to face one ball with his earlier victim Mark Haggart now umpiring. Of course, the next ball swung into Wilkin's pads in the vicinity of leg stump. The team all went up. But Mark Haggart's umpiring competence outweighed any emotional desire for revenge and he correctly determined that it was missing leg.

Wilkins' greater experience meant that the two batsmen were now able to rotate the strike. At this point Haggart I decided that he didn't want it to go to the wire and started to play more expansively. With six overs to go, and 30 runs needed, Deacon came on at the Hills end. Haggart went for it and drove the field back. Once he'd got on top of the run rate he continued until the target was overhauled and his 68 not out the matchwinning innings.

So Lynchmere narrowly missed out, but it's fair to say that the match was in the balance until close to the end. Had we held just one of the catches off Iain Haggart, there's a good chance we could have close the match out.