

Devon Over 50s B v Gloucestershire at Whimble/Shaldon

Imagine the scene – a gorgeous summer’s day in the heart of Devon’s beautiful countryside, not a cloud in the sky, the sun beaming down on the lush green fields surrounding the ground at Whimble, car doors opening and closing as players disembark after a long hot drive, stretching their legs and bending their backs, remarking on the stunning location, excitedly anticipating the game ahead...

Just one problem – even though Whimble had confirmed this fixture only recently - ain’t no bugger was there!!

Arriving to find the Whimble clubhouse locked, and not a local in sight. Sprinklers watering the square, no pitch marked out, no boundary flags, no stumps, no people. Two teams, two umpires and two scorers in search of a match... Someone (not sure who) found an unlocked window and got inside the clubhouse and opened the doors from the inside. On the noticeboard, contact details of the Chairman, secretary, treasurer, frantic phone calls to each and every one of them – no answer...

Turns out, Whimble were expecting us three weeks hence . . . To cut a long story short, the decision was made to re-locate the match to Shaldon, and with the agreement of the Gloucestershire boys, we all headed off there. All except Pete G, who, unbeknown to anyone else, was still inside the clubhouse when the decision was made to go to Shaldon, oblivious to everyone leaving the ground, until he was kicked out by the caretaker who eventually arrived and told him we had left!

Thanks to Steve and Charlie, we soon had a pitch marked out and ready to play on at Shaldon, and fair play to everyone - umpires, players, scorers, supporters - no one moaned, they just got on with the cricket.

Forfeiting the toss, Devon had to bowl first and at the first drinks break had kept the visitors down to 42-2 off 15, Paul Thomas leading the way finishing with excellent figures of 9-1-20-1. That was as good as it got for Devon, at 30 overs the score had reached 155-2 and from then on in the Gloucester boys doubled their score off the last 15, helping themselves to 10 runs an over, finishing on 314-5. A catch or two went down, that may or may not have made a difference to the final score, but probably didn’t.

After a fantastic tea provided by a local coffee shop (thank you to Charlie and his son for organising, collecting, and laying it all out) we began the task of scoring over 300 to win. The early loss of in-form opener Jeff Heath was a blow, but once Steve Preston (22), Steve Harris and John Harrison (19) had played themselves in we were 100-2 off 20 overs. Steve Harris went on to make 63 at a run a ball, with 11 x 4s and a six. Ian Hayter (41 off 33 balls, 3 x 6s and 3 x 4s) helped push the total up to a degree of respectability at 218-9 off our 45.

Overall, nothing much went to plan – the Whimble fiasco, nor the cricket – but the great thing was how everyone pulled together to get the match played. Much credit to the Gloucester boys and their captain for agreeing to re-locate to Shaldon and a late start, and a huge amount of thanks to Steve Preston and Charlie Woolnough (and family) for offering their ground to play on, and making sure all the players and officials had a delicious and plentiful tea. In a sense, the cricket was secondary to the experience of the day, it was great to see how the team all pulled together. After all, the show must go on!

Glos 314-5 (Thomas 1-20), Devon 218-9 (Harris 63, Hayter 41) Scorecard here <http://hcc50.play-cricket.com/website/results/3123512>