

## Sunday Second Eleven

P11 W5 D1 L5 (and Cancelled 11!)

A soggy summer of firsts for the Sunday Seconds. They included the first time we've ever had HALF our fixtures washed out; the first time we've beaten Mountain Ash - possibly because it's the first time we've played them; the first time we've lost to Cardiff Casuals; the first time the legendary Dean Conway turned out in a proper match; and the first time we've ever taken the pitch with two members of the Under-13 Girls Team. (And how glad we were to have them - their fielding won the game!)

Yet again, though, plenty of fun and some surprisingly good cricket. Each of the five wins turned into an epic of its type, and even the defeats were redeemed by some stunning and special efforts in a hopeless position. The one draw may well have been our best performance against Tondu's full - strength Saturday Second Eleven. (Look, that might not sound too strong to you, but if you'd seen our side that day....) Galloping towards a massive total on their own fast-scoring ground, we fought back to bowl them out for 159, and fancied our chances of a famous victory until the rain arrived at the end of their innings.

With a distinct shortage of visiting superstars from the Firsts (Ah my Merilahts and Beaverstocks long ago!) we had a few problems scoring enough runs. Some Sundays, in fact, I felt we'd have a few problems scoring ANY runs, but somehow we managed to muddle through. This usually meant begging the opposition to please let us field, to make sure the match lasted until tea. Of course, it's always nice when you do then scramble a success...

The one exception to all this was our missionary expedition to Mountain Ash, when it was clear to everyone except their captain that we HAD to bat first. To be fair, their umpire did apologise as a procession of people in all sorts of assorted sports kit made increasingly brief visits to the crease. Even the friendliest of bowling and field settings could not coax them past 74. Still, Whitey enjoyed the cider in their rugby club, although Jack Lansdown hasn't played for us since...

Simon Holiday also featured in that game. Sort of. Without ever actually getting onto the field. Ask him about it one day when you're feeling brave. The perils of being a doctor on call which kipped him on that occasion, though, did work in his favour against the Casuals on the May Bank Holiday. Due to play against Pencoed the day before, his duties meant he turned up at St Fagans twenty-four hours late, found we were one short, and battered us to victory. The Casuals weren't that bad about it, all things Considered, but in the spirit of the sport, I wasn't too sorry that they won the return fixture.

The return fixture with Ebbw Vale was a victim of the weather, which was a shame, given the astonishing events of the first match. Forced to bat second (see above) a couple of disastrously late drop-outs meant we faced the prospect of playing with nine men. Or rather, five men and four boys.

We did play with nine men in the end, but also with two young ladies, as Ellie Hopkins and Charlotte Smith leapt at the chance to make their senior debuts. Racing around the outfield and hurling the ball in with distinctly non-girly throws, they helped us restrict them to a gettable total which, of course, we duly got, thanks to some sensible negotiations with their sympathetic skipper. ("Yes, we're fine if you bowl your quickie against that one - he's old enough - but not against that one - he's still a bit small.") Even so, it took a combination of cultured sloggng from Rob Litchfield and a mix of kamikaze running and stoic heroics from the redoubtable Rod Howe to see us home. Rod shed blood - real stuff, none of your Harlequinade - and a tooth for the cause. Everybody delighted, including his dentist.

Everybody delighted, too, with the way some even younger youngsters than usual did so well for us this season. It was wonderful to see Jeremy Lawlor reach a very fine fifty, and even the opposition were disappointed when Gareth Lennon just missed out on his. There was some very good off-spin from Joe Conway, Elliott Blackler and Chis Van Os (it meant I had to wait ages to get myself on) and equally promising outswing from Ryan Davies and Matthew Jenkins.

Matthew, of course, along with his brother Anthony, was one of those who helped turn the side into very much a family affair, with the rest mainly made up of Sundays and Son. Huw and Rob Owen, Rod and Chris Howe, Steve and Elliott Blackler, Jeff and David Goodman and yes, Dean and Joe Conway all went into action together. Dean's debut was especially interesting. Having announced he was strictly a fielder, he then watched twenty overs of less than brilliant bowling at Whitchurch, decided he might turn his arm over after all, and promptly took a wicket. Whole careers have been built on less...

And talking of careers, the Captain's thanks to one of our side convinced he was battling to save his own. Huw Owen struggled to reach his usual high standards - he struggled to reach the bowling at Mountain Ash, it was that wide - but dogged his way through. In a summer in which, for the first time any of us can remember, he failed to score a single Sunday 50, he was forced to watch Clive Franklin score two. He must have felt like giving the whole thing up. Then again, we all did....

Rob King

## Selected Statistics

Most Runs:	R.Litchfield 141 (This is not a misprint)
50s.	C Franklin 2 (Neither is this) J Lawler, S Holliday, S Hemmadi, D Morgan, R Litchfield
Most Wickets:	R King 31
Best Bowling:	R King 5-5, 5-36, 4-39, 4-64 G Lennon 3-13                      R Ridley 3-23
Most Catches:	4 R King 3 R Ridley, S Blackler, P Harding
Most Stumpings:	3 D Goodman
Most Sandwiches:	H Owen
Most Ciders:	R Owen (Whitey watch out!)
Most Miles:	R Howe
Most Magnificent Catch:	G Lennon
Most Unexpected Catch:	R Litchfield
Most Feminine Fielding:	E Hopkins and C Smith (Joint Award)
Most Fat Fielding:	D White