

## The Inaugural 'Blackwood Cup'

Deans Marsh 'Swamp Rats' v Wye / Kennett River 'Sharks'. 5<sup>th</sup> December 2004

The idea for a 'friendly' between the two communities was spawned back in April on the sheltered banks of Separation Creek just upstream of the Old Scully Mill. Martians Café (the games major sponsor) proprietors, Andrew 'Turtle' Allen (with strong links to the Wye / Kennett communities) and 'The Mayor' of Deans Marsh, Mark Fagan soon jumped on board and a invitation / challenge from Deans Marsh community to the Coast was commissioned.

The week leading up to the game, was filled with speculation, batting orders, who's in, who's out? will 'Rip' open the bowling, who's 'Harry' playing for? rigorous fitness tests, etc. The 'Marsh' had named an experienced eleven of 'has beens', 'could have beens' and 'wanna be's'. Due to commitments the 'Swamps Rats' training had been limited to the bar at Martians Café. Talk that the 'Sharks' had been training at a secret location added to the interest in the game.

The 'Sharks' skipper Peter Jacobs won the toss and elected to bat, debunking the theory that fielding first and denying your team access to the bar for at least the first half of the game makes them odds on with the punters. 'Harry' Harrison opened the bowling for the host team. Neither team were sure where Harry's allegiance lay and were still confused after his first over which lasted 13 balls but did claim the vital first wicket, "Mullsy" Jones (0) playing all over the top of a blistering yorker. A solid partnership of 40 followed between the skipper and Matty Howard (36), Jacobs (16) was unlucky to be caught by Fagan. The skipper Grant Byrne introduced spin from both ends and it paid off handsomely. Harvey, his wrist spinners, flight and subtle changes of pace claimed Westbury (1) trapped in front and the valuable wicket of 'Turtle' Allen (0) (found auditioning for Strictly Dancing while out of his crease). With support from Fagan tossing them up into the light south easterly breeze from the City End, the scoring rate had been severely restricted. The 'Sharks' were in the proverbial. Score at the drinks break 5 for 69. Morrnan (25) and Russell (30) slowly set about the task of adding some respectability to the score line and with some sensible batting and maturity well beyond their years, pushed the score past 100. The partnership of 55 was broken when Bell took a scorching return catch to remove Morrnan. The tail was cleaned up quickly by Bryne and Bell and when Beamish was found 15 meters short of his ground the "Sharks" were all out. The 150 runs were "on the board" and appeared to be a competitive score.

The 'Swamp Rats' fielding could be best described as ordinary, six catches had been put down but the 'Sharks' batsmen had been seen frequenting the bar. Who was going stand up, grab the game by the scruff of the neck? Who was going to put their body on the line? Who was going to do the hard yards? These questions were being asked as the players tucked into a fine mix of freshly baked sponges, pickled corn beef sandwiches, homemade sweet biscuits and a VB.

The 'Swamp Rats' started disastrously and were inconvenienced by the loss of three early wickets. The bowling attack was sharp and disciplined, the ball often lifting dangerously of a good length, Korn and Howard were unplayable. Woods (11) and Zybel (21) combined to see the opening bowlers off and set about the run chase. Unfortunately both lost their wickets after doing the hard work. The 'Swamp Rats' had expected to better placed at this stage of the game. The 48 runs had been belted off 7 overs but in doing so had lost their most experienced batsmen. Byrne (a premierships captain for the Deans March Cricket Club the previous year) and Fagan (a seasoned campaigner) came together at 5 for 48, some responsible batting was required (pride in your wicket stuff). The two added 53 for the sixth wicket, Fagan (20) had taken some nasty hits to the upper body, as well as tearing the *flexor hallucis longus* (calf muscle) while successfully completing a sharp single and was carried from the field. A streaker, allegiance still unknown, was hunted off the ground by Umpire Smith wielding the pointy end of a cricket stump. This phenomenon seemed to upset the "Swamp Rats" concentration. Korn took a sharp slips catch off Howard to dismiss Byrne (27), 3 quick wickets followed and the 'Sharks' were back in the game. Bell, who looked good in the nets before the game along with Prossor (16) worked the one's and two's frustrating the fieldsmen. Prossor's running between wickets was a delight and entertained the bipartisan crowd. The two added 30 runs and the game again was evenly poised. When Bell (17) was given out LBW controversially the 'Sharks' had secured a one run win.

The standard of the game had surprised many, text book cover drives, quick singles and some fine catching had the large crowd entranced in the game. The 'Player of the Match' award was presented to Matt Howard 36 runs and 2/14. Other stand out performances, Grant Byrne 27 runs, 3/11, catch, stumping and Mark Fagan's highest score at any level of the game over a 25 year career.

The inaugural 'Blackwood Cup' was then presented for the first time to the 'Sharks' in what is hoped to be a annual game on the first Sunday in December. Thanks to Cindy & Jules for the scrumptious post match feast.