

Match Report - The Siddalls Cup Final

L'Isle Sur Tarn CC vs Toulouse CC

26th August 2007

After stunning progress through the 2007 Siddalls Cup competition, the highlight thus far being the bye in the first round, Toulouse CC fought their way to an illustrious place in the cup final verses the mighty Tarn. Following several difficult encounters verses the boys from Tarn (or relatively near by) during the season, the team, although as apprehensive as someone about to go canyoning (good luck this weekend boys!), were confident that on the right day, with the right performance and a little luck, the trend battered into us so far this season could be reversed.

The team's build up to the big day was as meticulous as ever. A net was organised at our new all weather venue the Thursday before the game (thanks duly going to the International School in Pibrac), with the all weather surface quickly coming into its own, as the majority of the practice was in torrential rain, made all the more disconcerting by the Borthers' all red micro kit (pictures available for a small fee). Practice was followed by a talk with our team nutritionist Beefy "more vinegar on my chips" Brooks over the odd lager or two. Another significant part of our pre match planning was to get to the Damazan match venue early. Such was the intensity and keen anticipation, most of the team got there about 20 hours early, at 4pm on Saturday afternoon in fact. Realising that this was perhaps a little too early, the team had another impromptu training session, this time in a thunderstorm that bizarrely arrived at about the same time as the Beefster. The kit meanwhile, just recovering from its previous soaking, endured another dowsing for good measure. Some hours later and injury free (!), team members then dispersed to their various billets, which as in all campaigns, some were better than others. Congratulations, goes to the skipper for stiffing, sorry recommending some of his players to a hotel with the hottest rooms, the smallest showers, and the most uncomfortable beds this side of the Skiptley Moor plague pit, and then leading from the front to go and stay somewhere else in lordly air conditioned opulence, Tiberious like, on top of a cliff in another Department.

Further team building was organised that evening for players, wags, kids, dogs and Wendy's earrings at a most excellent munchery in Buzet Sur Baise, "The Vigneron" (three stars awarded from the new TCC guide to gastronomy, ten from the even newer Guide de Monster Dessert Trolleys by our very own cheese critic, Mat "half mouse" Raboisson). Needless to say there was a strict no alcohol and sex policy in place the evening before the match and everybody (except our own fluffy Bunny) was stuffed into their uncomfortable beds, dreaming of glory, before 2100 hours..... ok this isn't true, there wasn't and they weren't.

All too soon, the match day arrived. Very early drizzle and light cloud was soon replaced by searing late August sunshine. It appeared to some, that all the days of the South West's summer that had gone missing earlier in the year had come back to shine all on the same day! Temperatures were set to rise near the 40s. The players began to arrive at the neatly manicured ground that

is Damazan. The tents, standards and beer filled cool boxes of the nobility were in place next to the field of battle. Slowly but surely Toulousains arrived from all corners of France and indeed Europe, faces grim and determined, uniforms gleaming, emblazoned with the dread fly of Toulouse. Weapons were oiled and edges honed (they were going to be needed). All right, put simply, we all pitched up, Nick was last as usual, got our damp stuff out of our old bangers and prayed the Tarn's bus would break down on route. Father Ted, who had returned from the Emerald Isle, no really he did, was looking depressed not least because he was determined to calculate runs per mile traveled, a statistic guaranteed to be point something, even with a double century, but also because he had failed to source his traditional match day fare of a small flock of roasted chickens, having lacked the foresight to reserve them in Buzet. Suddenly, much as Custer must have felt when seeing the massed Sioux nations arriving, the TCC faithful also realised their own opponents had also not gotten themselves lost or indeed the wrong day, as their bus crested the rise and trotted confidently into view, battle was now sure to be joined.

Captains were requested to join the umpires for the toss, our plan, agreed by secret ballet, was to put them into bat. Skippy, confident as ever offered the call to Tarn's Sitting Bull; he called, he lost, the Bunster had won the toss, sort of, we took the field full of expectation, our average age somewhere near the ambient temperature (of Mercury). The match commenced with the teams opening bowlers of Christoff and Jon "who shrunk my kit" Borthwick, with the first five overs very tight, with our first wicket taken in the sixth over by the deceptive left arm over the wicket bowling of Borthers. Unfortunately the luck that we hoped, and probably needed to take the day went against us, with a well timed slog to "cow corner" for six off JB, which missed the cows and found "duck city", (anyway I'm sure that's what JB said) in the form of the whacking great lake next to the ground. So after just eight overs, we had to get what we could out of a good, even, batting track and a ball that looked and bounced like a boiled beetroot.

The slightly older Wardle brother (the second best bowler in the league apparently) was called forward and accepted the soggy vegetable. This proved no obstacle to the Tipster, who bowling to his field soon had Muttaba caught smartly, and might I suggest rather surprisingly, by El Presedente, no doubt helped by the pond weed which by now had begun to dry to a sticky consistency. We now entered what turned out to be the defining period of the game, with the Tarns batsman, not least man of the match Ashutosh (bowled Blackham for 105), making hay in the unforgiving temperatures which were now developing. Sadly any vestiges of viscous weed had long since disappeared, as uncharacteristically, a veritable avalanche of catches fell to the ground. At least seven chances, seven, s-e-v-e-n, sept, one more than six, seven..... Anyway no names, no ramifications, except say after me "catches win _____s". The good news is I didn't drop any.....ok yes yes I didn't get close enough! Jeffers on the other hand caught Nasir of Tony T for 54, if anything a better catch than his first and Big Ted took a storming catch low to his right late on off the bowling of our tame marsupial to dismiss Zeeshan for a piffling 47. So this, combined with the fact that our long and square leg fielders spent more time in the adjoining maize field than Shoeless Joe, meant that Tarn put together the formidable total of 258.

Tea was duly signaled and the players followed shortly thereafter by the gathered gentry, descended on an excellent spread, which included everybody's favourites from sausage rolls to wedges of squidgy cake, all washed down with lashings of hot tea (on a more serious note a special thanks to all at Damazan involved in the tea, if you've managed to read this far, its was lovely).

Now it was the turn of Toulouse to take the middle, with Two Fags and Wardle the younger taking the middle purposefully. The first over was uneventful, but the second gave all in the ground a glimpse of the game it might have been, with the surroundings set alight with a succession of 4s and 6s of the bat of two cigs, a total of 15 coming from the over. Elation was soon followed by a groan as Wardle Jnr caught sight of something large and a little scary (allegedly) out of the corner of his eye and was promptly bowled. Next, after his heroics in the field, Brokeback was soon dispatched by a Tarn Bowler, who decided occasionally that he would use one of his "special" deliveries. A delivery so "special" that it's unlikely that anything like it has ever been seen on the cricket field anywhere else before. As well as taking the wicket of the hapless tent bandit, it caused Big Balls to uncharacteristically swear and earn some time in the Damazan stocks as result.

It was at this point that the always game TCC entered it's "rabbit in headlights phase" and seemed to hesitate fatally. Over after over passed punctuated with the occasional ripple of applause following a well-struck ball that found bovine lodgings. Sadly the valiant Toulouse couldn't get the oppositions fielders anywhere near the corn or the ducks, and it became apparent that the Tarn were well in control. Even solid knocks from Martin (27), Father Ted (16) and a belligerent knock from the Beefster for 42, made even better by a groin strain suffered bowling and then cramp treated by the Tarns twelfth/bar man followed by the look on Wardle the Ancients face when a angry Bunny (caught behind for seven!) came on to run for the now hobbled Balls, ever looked like being enough.

With 144 on the board after their 35 overs Toulouse had succumbed to the pressure skillfully applied by the tribe from Tarn and although not a massacre, it was still never-the-less pretty uncomfortable.

Speaking personally for a moment, because somebody else told me to write all the rest of this twaddle, I thought it was a great day (two days in fact) and I wouldn't have missed it, even with the result the way it was. Thanks to anyone reading who came along to support, also the wags, pets, Lord Lucan (all identified by Mme Alexa Wardle's excellent stabby TCC badges) and to the guys at Damazan for all the preparation (it won't be the same when you come to us in a couple of weeks – sorry).

I'm pretty confident I'm not alone, as I'm sure the rest of the club feel the same, It was a great great effort this year and I for one can't wait for next years Siddall's Cup!