

A CRICKET PITCH ON TOP OF THE WORLD

TO be the first to ratify an abstruse scientific theory is an achievement that brings untold satisfaction. Stratigraphical geologists have long believed that the millstone grit of the Southern Pennines, owing to its lamination and aeolian erosion, has been formed into flat-topped kopjes, but I have found none who, by personal observation, could confirm this.

On Saturday, leaving the valley where the Calder, shimmering in the sun, bubbled joyously past nodding bluebells or, hidden in gloom, slunk past gaunt weaving sheds, I climbed by a cobbled pack-horse pathway and then, through virgin moorland, to the roof of the world.

Incredibly, at the very top, I found the hypothesis to be true. A small plateau, flat and green, lay before my eyes, on which white figures besported themselves. Momentarily I felt a very Cortez crossing the line of the Mexican Andes, but my hopes of exploratory fame were to be dashed. A Yorkshire voice announced this verdant tableland as the home of Stones Methodists, who were playing Mytholmroyd in the first round of the Halifax Parish Cup.



MY deflation was, however, short lived, for an umpire failed to arrive—probably, I felt, half dead with exhaustion and thirst he would be lying in some dry rannel on the mountain slopes. I expected a Pennine St. Bernard, with a bottle of Halifax-brewed best bitter fastened to its collar, to be allowed to smell at the umpire's coat and then be sent forth on its errand of mercy.

Discomposed the players were, but it was not the umpire's fate that caused their agitation. "With vond not turning up, we s'all hev to do us own umpiring," they complained.

In the Stones dressing tent was a diagrammatic chart showing the correct execution of all cricket strokes. When the home team won the toss I expected, therefore, to be entertained to a glorious exhibition of all-round play.

I was, however, to be greatly disappointed, for Kenny Brown and Derek Pollard appeared to be able to do nothing but chop the ball to point.



WHETHER this was because a notice, announcing that members' subscriptions were now due (a matter of far more importance to a village club than the ability to make runs) had obscured part of the chart and left nothing but the square cut visible, I dared not ascertain, for to stare meaningly at such batting advice when four wickets had fallen for 15 runs might have resulted in my welcome becoming somewhat strained.

There had been skill and effectiveness in this early Mytholmroyd attack. Malcolm Roberts had bowled deceptively to the strong breeze and as the batsmen and fielders

ably brought a temporary undermining of Stones' morale.

After point had fielded almost every ball in the first two overs without mistake, his captain suddenly moved him into the slips.

A ribald Stones supporter suggested that "happen he wants someb'dy else to pick t'ball up for a change," but this was no act of

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friendly consideration. Stafford Williams was carefully brought from the covers to replace the banished fieldsman and Derek Pollard, playing the next ball as had become his wont, found a low ball carefully caught by the new arrival.



THE slow rate of scoring was causing a perturbation among the home supporters and, possibly with a view to augmentation, the Stones player who was



Ronnie Palmer, who scored 52 for Stones Methodists.

acting as temporary umpire gave a no-ball.

If it were his intention to improve the position his plan met with abject failure, for the next ball saw Kenny Brown's wickets scattered.

To relieve the parlous situation came Ronnie Palmer. Wisely he abandoned the cut that had proved neither safe nor cumulative for his predecessors.

It is strange how few batsmen realise that they cannot be caught out in the next field. Well aware of this little appreciated wisdom, Ronnie drove and hooked beyond the confines of the narrow plateau. Eleven fours were counted in his 52 before he demonstrated to his earlier batsmen that the cut, to be effective, must be made firmly, downwards, and with supple wrists.

With a skill that J. T. Brown could not have bettered, the ball flashed from Ronnie's bat, but there was the outflung hand of Rex Greenwood which held, incredibly, to the speeding ball.



THERE was to be little resistance. Stubbornly Dan Hamer held up the Mytholmroyd attack for a while. Unhappily, Fred Senior doubled himself up as the ball struck him amidships, an incident that was to confirm my wife's opinion that it was time I had my glasses changed. For although the umpire's upraised finger gave undoubted proof that the ball had hit Fred's leg, from the place where I was propping up the dry stone wall, it seemed to my myopic vision that when he was hauled to his feet, Fred was indicating to the amateur masseurs that he would prefer them to rub a part of his anatomy just below his breast bone.

Nevertheless, Fred had to depart. The effect of an incident depends on the personality. For this, which brought physical hurt to Fred and visual doubt to me, rejuvenated Malcolm Roberts. He swan, through the Stones tail unimpeded to collect six wickets for 17 runs in the total of 103.



FOR a time Stones attacked sturdily. Dan Hamer, with medium-paced accuracy, and Fred Senior, with flighted cunning, held Mytholmroyd at bay.

Two wickets fell and vociferous appeals were turned down before Ken Smith laid a trenchant hand on the Stones bowlers. Combining all-round culture with powerful driving, he thrashed the home attack.

With three wickets down and the scores level, Ken, who had made 55, swung mightily for the winning hit. For the first time his bat failed him. Melancholy as Hagar in the wilderness of Beer-sheba, he wandered pavilionwards.



THE next ball dismissed Ken Butterworth and only by a violent retardation of a sliding back leg did Jack Mitchell avoid being stumped when a high-tossed ball wriggled round his advancing bat.

A pulled boundary ended this late Stones onslaught; Mytholmroyd advanced to the second round.

As I descended the almost vertical slope to the valley I overtook an old supporter, pondering deeply.

"It's a queer thing, tha knaws," he opined, "We lost bi five wickets and vond theer Mytholmroyd chap 'atted to umpire turned dahn five l.b.w. appeals 'at ahr lads made. If t'reyt chnp 'ed turned up, varry likely we su'd 'ev won."

NEXT WEEK.—Bradford Mutual Sunday School League: Shelf Witchfield Methodists v. Denby Clough.