

BOGGY AND CAKED IN MUD!

Historic Match: Booth v Blackley, 1981

By Sam Smith

Throughout Blackley Cricket Club's illustrious history there have been countless occasions of historic matches, humorous moments and significant developments. There are many different people at Blackley who will have their own special memories that will live with them forever.



The scene of the game

One of those people is Steve Williams, currently approaching his 45th season with the club. Steve has recently decided to hang up his spikes, leaving behind some very fond recollections of his playing days. When asked about the most memorable match he has been involved in, Steve recalls one overcast Tuesday evening back in 1981. Blackley were preparing to take on Booth in the second round of the Parish Cup, in what proved to be a quite remarkable game of cricket.

The match was originally scheduled for the Sunday but heavy rain ensured there was no cricket on that day. The tie had to be decided so it was arranged that play would commence two days later, on the Tuesday at 6.30pm.

Steve recalled, "When we arrived on the Tuesday the wicket was still pretty wet. Booth is notorious for having a very boggy pitch and it certainly was that. We (Blackley) were put into bat and found it difficult to score runs on a very bowler-friendly wicket. We were finally bowled out late in the evening for a disappointing 62."

Play was then abandoned for the day due to bad light, so the match had to be completed the following evening. On Wednesday the sun shone over Booth all day and when the players returned to conclude proceedings they were greeted with a very different pitch. The wicket and outfield had dried out considerably and the track looked far more inviting to bat on than it did the previous day. The conditions did not give Blackley much hope of claiming the 10 wickets they needed for victory.

Steve said, "We turned up on the Wednesday, took one look at the wicket and thought 'we are going to get stuffed here'. Booth came out to bat and it was soon apparent that there was still a bit in it for the bowlers.

"In the first over their opening batter played forward at a ball, got an edge and it came to me in the slips. I dived full length forward and caught it. I got up really pleased with myself until I looked down and discovered I was caked from head to foot in mud. There was an imprint of me in the ground where I had dived and caught it.

"That's when we found out that although the pitch had dried on the surface it was still crusty and wet underneath. Our opening bowlers Michael Jones and Barry Inghan exploited the conditions perfectly and rolled Booth over for 44 to grab ourselves an unlikely victory."

It was indeed an incredible performance from Blackley under the circumstances and it will be remembered for many years to come.

Steve added, "It was a fantastic game to play in because runs were so hard to come by. Every run had to be grafted for. I just feel privileged to have been part of it."