



The sun shone brightly as assorted scribes and spinners (and the odd batsman and bowler) gathered at Thames Ditton Cricket Club on 6 June 2007 for the ninth annual IBP Journalists v PRs cricket match, sponsored again by Szerelmey Stone Restoration.

As is traditional for these titanic clashes, the day began with lunch and some much needed pre-match rehydration at the clubhouse bar. Players from both sides mingled over a Lucozade Sport, or

perhaps something stronger, to discuss in keen anticipation the afternoon ahead.

For the second year running, PR skipper Andy Walker won the toss. Unlike 12 months ago he decided to bat. A bold move and a declaration of real intent from the PRs, who were still smarting from two defeats in successive years. Deciding that youth was the best policy the PRs opened with 'chip off the old block' Chris Helsen and Anthony Hewson. These young tyros harvested runs at a fast pace, though not without taking a few risks, to give the PRs a flying start. Debutant Hewson in particular warmed to his task with a series of lusty blows in a quick-fire 30 and a retirement, in line with the rules of this fixture.

The PRs continued to amass runs thanks to the left handed Chris Smith, who batted in languid fashion bringing to mind David Gower in his pomp, ably assisted by some silky stroke play from South African Greg Verhoef. Veteran Tony Murphy chipped in with a typically robust 30 and skipper Walker also bagged a 30, though at a more Boycottian pace. The Journalists bowled well throughout, making the PRs work for their runs, with some tidy spells from Chris Windle, Glen Gatty and Paul Samter. Captain Ben Roskrow was also his usual parsimonious self with the ball. Nevertheless, the PRs kept the scoreboard ticking over and scored 175 for 6 off their allotted 30 overs, surely a tough task for the Journalists as the afternoon sun continued to beat down.



The Journalists set about their innings with their own declaration of intent by opening with their key batsmen Glen Gatty and Chris Hart. Experienced cricketers both, they looked confident from the off. However PR opening bowlers Andy Cassie and Greg Verhoef proved equal to the task taking a couple of wickets to check the Journalists' progress. Cassie, a veteran of these contests, put in a tidy spell on a pitch he knows very well and was ably supported by Verhoef, who bent his back with gusto during a hostile four-over spell.



Wickets continued to fall at regular intervals, thanks in the main to a superb six-over and four wicket stint from Iqbal Akram, who narrowly missed out of a five-for, and also skipper Andy Walker, whose three-wicket haul was augmented by two catches, including one tumbling dive at the wicket and a steeper to account for Journalists' skipper Ben Roskrow. Despite some spirited hitting from the Journalists' Glen Gatty, skipper Roskrow and a notable cameo knock from Steve Menary, the PRs however had the edge and continued to take wickets at critical moments. This restricted the Journalists to 136 all out and so the PRs ran out worthy winners by just over 39 runs.

PR skipper Andy Walker collected the IBP Winners Trophy from sponsors Szerelmey. This year's Alan Hughes Memorial Tankard for man of the match went to Anthony Hewson for getting the PRs off to such a good start with the bat, a start which provided the platform for the PRs second victory in four years.

As always the game was played in an excellent spirit, with some gentle banter and a great camaraderie between the two teams. The weather couldn't have been better and the food and drink as ever was top notch. There may be better ways of spending an early summer afternoon out of the office but none that immediately spring to mind!

Thanks to Thames Ditton CC for providing the ground for this battle of wills and to David Helsen for organizing all the elements that made the day so special in the IBP calendar.

Inevitably, all thoughts now turn to 2008 and the tenth anniversary of this clash. Next year's match will have to go some to reach this year's standard of play, which by common consent was the most accomplished in the history of games between IBP's Journalists and PRs.

So, roll on 2008 and another sunny day in June...