

ETON RAMBLERS

TOUR TO INDIA 2005

The Eton Ramblers embarked on their groundbreaking tour to India in October 2005. Led by the triumvirate of Rory MacLeay, Tim Best and Rob Bruce, the Ramblers played 8 games in Delhi and Rajahstan over 16 days.

The party arrived in Delhi and were immediately put to work at the obligatory nets at Gargi College, which was also the venue for our first fixture against the British High Commission the next day. Rory MacLeay won the toss and elected to field but it was not long before all corners of the ground were bombarded by the opposition opening batsmen, and without an excellent spell of left arm spin from Hugo Loudon (4 for 43), the total of 260 after 40 overs would have been even more imposing. However MacLeay (70) and Loudon (37) opened with a flurry of boundaries and 83 was reached in the first 10 overs.

Unfortunately at that point the spinners were introduced, and the Ramblers quickly subsided to 172 all out, showing plenty of appetite, but alas very little skill, in combating the sharply turning ball. This turned out to be a familiar tale. The wicket of Loudon was crucial, and he became the first, although definitely not the last, victim of a doosra .

After an excellent evening, courtesy of Mark Runacres, the Deputy High Commissioner, the Ramblers the next day took on the Old Boys XI, an amalgamation of several schools old boys teams, including Mayo College, at the picturesque Teri ground. It was immediately disturbing to see that several of the opposition batsmen from the previous day's drubbing had turned up to have another go ! We also welcomed Mansur Ali Ahmed, who played for the Ramblers in the Cricketer Cup in 2004.

The Ramblers however batted well on a slow low pitch, and reached the highly respectable total of 218 for 5 off their 40 overs, thanks to significant contributions from veteran Michael Brooks (50), Nelion Ridley (22), Charlie Winter (29) and Harry Chetwood (33*). The Old Boys openers started brightly, with Mansur in good touch, but were pegged back by a cunning display of increasingly slow seam bowling from Joss Ridley (5 for 31). However it took a ferocious spell from James Bruce (3 for 23) to make the game safe and the Ramblers emerged winners by 39 runs.

A long, but rewarding, day followed. The tour party, now joined by the Flemings, Vesteys, Ed Bruce (from Perth) and Kate Chetwood, travelled to Agra to see the Taj Mahal, and then moved on to Bharatpur via Fatephur Sikri to visit the renowned bird park. Tim Best displayed a particular enthusiasm and knowledge for the bird life. A tired group arrived in Jaipur that evening to be met by the Russells , Berens and a brutal first fines committee, managed by the turbaned Hugo Loudon.

Due to the clash with the Diwali festival of light, only one fixture was played in Jaipur against a particularly strong Jaipur Under 19 side for the Dundlod Challenge Trophy . A promising start from Ed Bruce (35) and William five star Russell (29) was frittered away, with no Rambler able to cope with the array of spinners. 148 was not enough, and

despite another fast spell with the new ball from James Bruce, the target was reached for the loss of 4 wickets.

The party moved on to Ajmer and the striking school ground at Mayo College, notable not just for the magnificent backdrop, but also for the tank and jet fighter parked on the boundary's edge. With Mayo on 85 for 6, the Ramblers appeared in control, but a century from Patrick, their leading batsman, changed the game, and 207 seemed too many on a fast wearing pitch. And so it proved. Ed Bruce again batted well for 26, but the loss of Matt Fleming for 28 when well set was the beginning of the end. Despite some lusty blows from Archie Berens (20), the Ramblers fell short by 58 runs. The wicket keeping of Ryhdian Lewis, with 3 stumpings, was particularly impressive.

After an entertaining, and at times bizarre, evening at the tented village in Pushkar, the group moved on to Jodhpur and the OE Dinner at the Mehrangarh Fort hosted by the Maharajah. The Ramblers were represented in the speeches by Merv Dunnington Jefferson, who put on his customary virtuoso performance.

By now the tour party was beginning to struggle off the pitch. Claire Bruce, our resident physio, was needed as much for her diuretic supplies, as her physio skills, although Charlie Matheson's hamstring appeared to need constant attention. The decision to bring an extended party of 21 players was looking an increasingly sound one. However on the pitch, things were looking up, as the Ramblers defeated a sub-continent OE XI by 3 wickets. Chemical Ali Douglas with 2 for 14 led the way with the ball, ably assisted by the guile of George Vestey (1 for 20). Adrian Bignell's calm 46 not out guided the Ramblers home when a flurry of self-inflicted run outs threatened to derail the victory charge.

The next day the Ramblers encountered what appeared to be the Jodhpur first XI at the Railway Stadium. Despite bowling well, with Matt Fleming (3 for 43) again to the fore, supported by some gritty wicket-keeping from George Deedes (a particularly fine effort considering his state of health), Jodhpur XI made 268 off their 40 overs. The Ramblers initially kept up with the run rate, but wickets continued to fall regularly, and were eventually bowled out for 152, William Russell (33) and an entertaining knock from Harry Chetwood (36) being the principal contributors.

And then finally on to the lake city of Udaipur, via the magnificent temple at Ranakpur. The quality of the opposition did not fade, and the Ramblers were defeated in both matches against extremely strong sides.

In the first game Rob Bruce bowled well with the new ball, but the quality of the batting was high, and the Rajput Warriors ended with a total of 247 for 5. The Ramblers made an excellent effort at reaching this large total. Matt Fleming made a swift 64, and whilst Ed Bruce (62) was still there, hope remained. John Dunnington — Jefferson, showing at last the considerable form he had been showing constantly off the pitch, wielded the blade valiantly, but the Ramblers were eventually defeated by 29 runs.

The next day, a superb 161 not out by opener Vineet Saxena set up the Lake City Tigers formidable total of 259 for 7, with all the bowlers suffering in turn. In reply, Hugo Loudon made an excellent 54, and momentum was continued by Guy Selmon (23),

Nelion Ridley (30) and Archie Berens (22). However ultimately the target was too great and the Ramblers fell short by 60 runs.

That evening we enjoyed the fantastic hospitality of the Field Club amid a plethora of presentations, which was followed the next day by a hard earned day by the swimming pool. The party returned to Delhi for the last night dinner at Olive s restaurant (I doubt they will have us back) before flying out the next morning back to London.

A record of Won 2, Lost 6 might not look too good, but the level of opposition was of high quality, and the experience of playing top class spin bowling on dusty pitches, special indeed. Never can a tour party have retained such high morale and sense of humour through such an intensive and challenging itinerary — an amazing experience.

Rory MacLeay

Eton Ramblers Tour to India 2005

Statistics

Results:

Played 8; Won 2; Lost 6

Won

179	Old Boys XI	Eton Ramblers	218/5
197/7	Sub-continent OE XI		201/7

Lost

260/8	British High Commission	Eton Ramblers	172
149/4	Rajasthan Wanderers		148
207/9	Mayo Masters		149
268	Maharajah of Jodphur's XI		152
247/5	Rajput Warriors		218/8
259/7	Lake City Tigers		199

Batting

	Inns	N.O	Runs	Ave.	H.S
RDO MacLeay	4	1	104	34.67	70
E Bruce	4	0	134	33.50	62
WAB Russell	4	0	113	28.25	47
HJH Chetwood	4	1	82	27.33	36
MV Fleming	4	0	101	25.25	64
HJP Loudon	5	0	126	25.20	54
A Bignell	5	2	75	25.00	46*
MH Brooks	5	0	114	22.80	50
NLE Ridley	5	0	91	18.20	30
JTA Bruce	3	1	32	16.00	14
R Lewis	4	1	39	13.00	30
AJR Berens	4	0	45	11.25	22

Batting cont....

	Inns	N.O	Runs	Ave.	H.S
CEC Winter	4	1	33	11.00	29
GPF Selmon	5	0	50	10.00	23
CM Matheson	4	2	15	7.50	8*
GW Deedes	3	0	22	7.33	15
JA Dunnington - Jefferson	4	0	25	6.25	15
AE Douglas	3	1	9	4.50	6
RWJ Bruce	4	0	10	2.50	5
JTD Ridley	3	2	2	2.00	1*
G Vestey	1	0	0	0.00	0

Bowling

	Overs	Mdns	Runs	Wkts	Ave.
JTA Bruce	28.2	3	88	6	14.67
MV Fleming	29	2	115	7	16.43
JTD Ridley	36	1	209	11	19.00
HJH Loudon	34	2	222	10	22.20
HJP Chetwood	25	1	160	5	32.00
G Vestey	22.5	0	125	3	41.67
AE Douglas	28.1	2	140	3	46.67
AG Bignell	17	0	113	2	56.50
RWJ Bruce	31	0	170	3	56.67
E Bruce	22	1	126	2	63.00
CM Matheson	21	0	159	2	79.50
GPF Selmon	1	0	15	0	-
JA Dunnington - Jefferson	5	0	44	0	-

Fielding

R Lewis 8 (5st)

WAB Russell 5

HJH Loudon 3

NLE Ridley

GW Deedes 2 (1 st)

J Dunnington - Jefferson

MH Brooks 1

E Bruce

AE Douglas

RDO MacLeay

JTD Ridley

G Vestey