

rowan cup win!

the mighty secured the rowan cup for the second time in four years at shawholm on saturday, on a beautiful day in front of a healthy crowd, in a great match.

the visitors, ayr, batted first and, despite losing wickets, kept the scoreboard more than ticking over as they went on to post 119 for 9. top-scorers for the new cambusdoon side were mccrossin (34), johnstone (27) and rafiq (25) - three of the top four in fact. mind you mccrossin got a "life" very early on when a *cheesy* no ball thumped into the base of his off stump.....before careering to the third man boundary for 5! ouch.

to his credit he then made the 'loc pay as he top-scored with 34. and it was rafiq that held the tail together after the top order had departed, eventually being dismissed himself with the score on 117 as seventh man out. his mode of departure was a *spenny* stumping that gave *bean* one of his four victims.

mohsin again bowled well, too, as he picked up two scalps and went for just 26 in his five-over spell.

the 'loc had fielded reasonably well bar a *cheesy* bloomer at long-off, with young dani' chaudhry's late inclusion bringing with it another good, lively fielder into the side. talking of "good, lively fielders", mention of sal's two good grabs to dismiss mccrossin and johnstone :-)

120 to win - nice and easy to work out. that'll be a run-a-ball then!

the batters got off to good start too: *bean* and *cheesy* sticking on 25 in the first three overs. nice. but then a period of frustration as baird tied the boys down a bit. only two added in overs four and five. the first wicket - *cheesy's* - fell in over seven as he was caught on the mid-wicket boundary by andy mcelnea, and then *bean* went next over, holing out tamely to mccrossin at extra cover. two new batters in then: sal' and *tify*.

a fresh start and different tack. *bunting!* atif hit 18 off sixteen balls and sal' would smack two maximums in his 21-ball 25. but atif didn't hang around for too long being trapped lbw by a rafiq full toss. enter mohsin ali. he'd bowled well, how was his batting tho'?

the answer by ball #1 of the twentieth over was "ideal"! his unbeaten 33 saw the side home to the cup and he finished it in style with a crashing 4 over long off. this added to three others and a 6 in his 30-ball 33*. a m.o.t.m. performance if ever there was one mr ali! well played.

all that was left was the presentation ceremony. thanks to the ump's, *shorty* for scoring through the season, and his team by *beanie*, before lifting the silverware and formally announcing the start of celebrations!

well done guys, a very nice way to end the season.

safe!

the mighty 'loc secured premier division cric' for another year at stirling county's beautiful new, *new williamfield* ground when they defeated first division runners-up aberdeenshire in the relegation/promotion play-off.

the victory margin was 24 runs and, on the face of it, seems "regulation". but in fact - and typical of the 'loc, and especially this season at the 'loc! - it was far from that.

batting first after being inserted the side got off to a steady enough start with *cheesy* playing fluently and scoring freely, whilst *bean* held his end up. but *beanie* was out-of-sorts and was first to go having notched just the single to his own name in an opening partnership of 29. this brought the skipper to the

crease and he and rob' batted nicely adding 72 in fifteen overs or so before *hampo'* was adjudged leg-before by brian papworth; mcgillewie the bowler. *hampo'* out, saleem in.

so it was *cheesy* and *the mex'* in the middle. now some might say sal' should be a walking warning to *cheesy* should his eating prowess not be curbed, but today they had something else in common. and that "something" was to cost *the dons* big time. *cheesy* had reached 26 when an attempted pull off aberdeenshire's west was only diverted straight up to cover. for some bizarre reason two aberdeenshire fielders got under the regulation catch, both continued to call for it and both then watched it drop onto the turf between them. "ouch" as rob' went on to score 71. then, with saleem on 29 off 59 balls, it happens again: ball mis-hit to backward point, coetzer and west both call for it, both get under it, and both let it fall without either getting a hand on it. sal' goes on to smack 15 off seven balls to notch valuable late runs as get gets to 44. extraordinary. around *cheesy*, *hampo'* and saleem there were runs chipped in by lots of others as the total posted made it to 213 with *baby* with the last man out, cleaned up by clubb. 214 to win then.

certainly competitive, but not unbeatable, the 'loc needed to bowl straight and field well. and when the seventh aberdeenshire wicket went down with 44 on the 'board in the twentieth over it looked like *youngy* wouldn't be late for his black tie dinner starting at 7.30pm at *the hilton* after all. this website report was half-written and the headline was "toffee!".

an eighth wicket stand of 120+ between buchan and mcgillewie later however and the unthinkable was....well, it was thinkable. the 'loc's ground fielding had deserted them and everyone was at it - *'lexy* seemed to have polos for palms, *maddy* was asleep at long-on, mohsin and sal's bodies now refused to bend beyond 90 degrees, and even *cheesy*, *hampo'* and *bean* were fumbling ground balls and spilling chances! what was going on. aberdeenshire were going at almost "sixes" and needed 53 off seven as over 44 started.

'lexy was bowling and two great yorkers in, ball #3 was crashed by mcgillewie to extra cover where - to the delight of the 'loc and their healthy band of supporters - *hampo'* snaffled the catch. scenes of unrestrained joy followed! the next over buchan went too - run out by *bean* with a direct hit....from the boundary! *the fat lady* was gargling. all that was left was for *cheesy* to grab his third wicket of the match to add to his top-scoring 71 and remove clubb's middle stump. cue unrestrained, unrestrained joy!

in addition to *cheesy's* "3-for", *bean* had been his immaculate self with the ball (10-4-19-2), as had *hampo'* (8-1-19-1), to put the brakes on the aberdeenshire run chase and pick up valuable wickets at the same time. and - "early doors" to borrow footy parlance - the 'loc's ground fielding had looked much-improved with *doogie* and euan setting the standard.

how to [almost] snatch defeat from the jaws of victory eh.....

so prem' div' cric' at shawholm for at least another year folks - what'll season '08 bring? who knows is the honest answer: the only thing that is, is that it's never dull!

everything that couldv'e gone wrong.....

let's start at the end and work back shall we: picture the scene - west of scotland need 1 run to win, heriot's fp have taken 7 west wickets. if a run's scored the 'loc are safe, if heriot's get another wicket - and with it a fourth losing bonus point, the 'loc face a relegation play-off. so what happens? you've guessed it. west's batter gets out, the necessary single's then gained, the 'loc go to stirling next weekend to face aberdeenshire in a winner-takes-all.....well takes a premier division place, next season.

but working backwards, why was the attention on the action in the gloom at hamilton crescent anyway?? answer: the 'loc had been thumped out of sight at bothwell castle policies by *uddy*. well, actually that's

not strictly true. they were thumped by paul hoffman! *hoffy* followed up his second duck in three days against the 'loc with a bat in his hand by wreaking havoc with the ball: 10-5-10-5 might look like a scorer with a stutter but it's actually *pic's* figures on the day. carnage.

this column's bemoaned the 'loc's batting lineup's collective frailties all season and saturday's final regulation sncl match seemed to encapsulate, and underline, this all over again. after having bowled out the home side for [just] 185 on a hard and true wicket, the 'loc then collapsed to 35 for 7! from here 70 all out was simply a formality. three guys only got past 10, no-one got past 16 and two blobs kind of sums things up. throw in three lbws and three batters getting their woodwork re-arranged and you really are beginning to get the full picture.

what's going on? and what about no batter facing more than 27 balls! extraordinary.

uddy certainly got their revenge for the three previous defeats they'd suffered at the hands of the 'loc this year.....and how.

but things had started so differently. 185 all out gave the 'loc a chance. three-and-a-bit only per over. how hard's that? the *uddy* innings too had demonstrated frailty in the batting with only surprise opener ricky bawa (57) and pro' ian moran (40) offering much. bawa batted sensibly and rode his luck at times, his 50 coming off 94 balls.

and as ever mr bawa provided many of the afternoon's lighter moments. his prolonged spell in the "nervous 40s" brought a smile to a number of faces - ricky seeming to freeze as 46 went up on the 'board and then needing another 18 balls to get the necessary 4. his sky'ing one to *maddy* off a no ball also brought a humorous moment to proceedings, but the best was the race between *uddy's* hardly-slim-himself overseas am' and ricky, deep into the outfield in the 'loc innings. picture the scene: the 'loc are a million down and *uddy* have at least five slips and a gully. the ball's nicked thru' the cordon and ricky sets off down to the far corner. half-way there and overseas am' james decides to give him a race.....and wins comfortably to the enjoyment of the watching spectators. james hurls the ball in and trots back to the cordon, but ricky's knackered and takes literally three deliveries to get back into his previous position. priceless.

back to the game tho'. the rickster's 50 had been the only real innings of substance for *uddy* bar moran's 40. around these two others flattered to deceive, but no-one really got in. *bean* and *hampo'* were their typical miserly selves with the ball, their twenty overs cost just 46 runs. and there was decent support from *cheesy* and *maddy*. the ground fielding was good too - the official measure of this, the "*spenorantometer explosion rate*", being very low on the day.

and so it was that with two bonus points "bagged" after townson's last ball run out, the 'loc boys had tea in good spirits. little did they know what was to happen.....

so it's play-off time. aberdeenshire await and the venue's stirling's new pad. the two sides have met once already this season - in the scottish cup - when the 'loc sneaked thru'. but if they bat like they've done all season - and the stat's don't lie - they'd better bowl and field like never before :-)) the stat's show that, if you exclude the highest and lowest scores each has recorded in the sncl this season to remove statistical "funnies", the 'loc xi that finished the match against *uddy* have a combined average of under 120 with the bat. so if anyone's looking for reasons for the side's predicament - *stop* - look no further.

but next week gives the boys a chance to change everything.....

'loc sneak past uddy to reach *rowan cup* final!

the 'loc boys did the club proud on thursday as they snuck past a talented uddingston side at shawholm. after being restricted to just 86 in their [reduced] sixteen-over allocation by tight bowling by messrs bawa, bradley, hoffman and townson, the 'loc boys then - somehow - managed to restrict uddy to just 73 in their reply!

so a second *rowan cup* final in three years, 2004 seeing the 'loc triumphant over greenock in the clydesiders' own back yard. but back to thursday's semi-. the 'loc batted first and, as *uddy* fielders still arrived at the old ground, ricky bawa bowled the first seed from the river end. said delivery was only after uddy's "temporary" fielder - mr ian moran - had been politely asked to leave the field! cheeky!

nomy fielded an over instead whilst *pjc hoffman esq.* got kitted up. over two saw everyone back in the right teams, but by then *sal'* was back in the hutch having been bowled by *gav' bradley.* 6 for 1.

cheesy and *atif* added a few tho' to stabilise things - *cheesy* playing the anchor role. and this partnership was only broken when the talented *bradley* took a tremendous "c&b", snatching a middled off-drive from *'tify.* ouchy. now it was that well-loved combo': *chees'* and *bean!* love it. these two added 32 for the third wicket, *cheesy* cleaned up by *hoffy.*

from this point on it was "project scoreboard tick over". and the project was successfully implemented as [first] *bean* and *mohsin*, and [then] *bean* and *spenny* continued to build the total. *mohsin* did more than nurdle tho', with one particular straight 6 being very pleasing on the eye. *bean* would be out off the last ball (28) to finish second-top scorer behind *cheesy* (30) and having helped post 86 for 5.

in reply uddingston never really got going. 2 for 2 and 26 for 5 were scoreboard read-outs that 'loc players have been well used to seeing this season.....when *they're* batting! how strange to see another side - and a good one at that - struggling instead. oh for that scoreboard come saturday's sncl encounter - gulp, yikes!

anyway from 26 for 5 the visitors were unlikely to recover enough to win, and an injury to *dangerman amir gul* didn't help - *uddy's* number five on the night having to use a runner. for the 'loc the damage had been done by *bean* up-top with "4-for", including *uddy's* "saltire" - and pinch-hitter extraordinaire - *paul hoffman.* the 'loc were delighted to see *pjc* depart tamely "c&b" in over two. phew!

in their tail, young *neil macleod* batted well and added 22 with *amir* before one swing too many made him one of *atif's* two victims in the game.

when ball six of over sixteen had been bowled the visitors were 14 short of victory and the 'loc had booked a final berth against *ayr.* saturday's sncl clash - as mentioned - will now be even harder to win with uddingston sure to be looking for revenge, and having the talent to do just that! fingers crossed eh!

allstars win, but it was close!

the taxi's from scotland's capital arrived on time and so the *greenock allstars* were,....well, all-stars in fact. the full boohna of internationalists were on show and so it was "game on". the 'loc batted first and it was the usual i'm afraid. a continuous trickle of wickets fell throughout the sixteen over allocation and it was more of a revolving door than a clubhouse door as batters came and went with gay abandon.

the full range of dismissals was on show too: we had catches, bowled, run out - you name it - anything but dull! to the detail: *cheesy* made 16 and *bean* made one more; the rest didn't get to double figures. and by "the rest" i mean the rest.....bar *youngy.* mind you *kgj* was padded up as early as over 14! there were a couple of blobs resulting in entries in the season's "webbed feet" award table too: welcome to *sal'* and *baby.* 78 was the scrambled together total - not great, but not horrible either.

extras contributed a nice 14.1% of the total too. 79 to win then.

and greenock started nicely. 44 for 0 off eight was ideal - 35 needed in the second half of their innings. "toffee" one might suggest! but then *hampo*' decided to take a hand - mohsin had just nipped out pro' mcintosh and garry must've felt left out 'cos he then got rid of berrington, weeraratna first ball and then kev' mclaren. interesting all of sudden.

two overs to go and still 9 needed to win. only 2 came off *g's* last and so it was 7 needed off the last. 3 from the first three balls meant it was 4 from three - then a tony judd maximum ended any chance of a famous 'loc win - it just wasn't to be.

the *allstars* win again, the 'loc lick their wounds before thursday's rowan cup semi- with uddy. another case of what might've been where just not getting enough runs cost the side dear.

dark side defeated - series gets close

the 'loc are clawing their way back into the series with the *dark side*. tuesday saw another 'loc win to narrow the 'dale's lead. can the 'loc overtake'em? who knows. to tuesday's match. batting first the 'dale were restricted to 112 with some decent bowling by the six bowlers used - one wicket each for zaeem and arran added to a couple of run outs.

in the run chase it was regulation after *nj* had come-and-gone for a blob. *nomy's* good form continued with 53, and *nichty* racked up 41, doubling his 6 count in the process.

it was then left to scotty and dani' to score the winning runs and the 'loc had won with a few balls to spare.

it really is tiresome.....

regular readers of this column (good evening mum!) will know that common themes this season have been a bemoaning of the 'loc's batting frailties and a caution that bonus points frittered away might come back haunt the club come early september. well, to both subjects later on, but for now dear reader i'd like to take liberties with the poetic licence afforded a reporter to bemoan something else. [ed: for those not interested in our reporter's soap box rantings, skip on a paragraph!]

the heading of this match report is "it really is tiresome....." but it's not referring to the 'loc's collapse from 86 for 2, to 153 all out, nor the fact that 4 more runs would've brought a bonus point, rather it refers to the tiresome antics of oppo' players who think that utter jibberish spoken out in the middle is both "part of the game" and in some way in keeping with the spirit of the game; a spirit all players of the game are custodians of. saturday at glenpark was just the most recent example, greenock just the most recent culprits. picture the scene: greenock looking for three or four wickets to secure 2 bonus points from the game that, by that stage, they were sure to win, the 'loc tailenders with 157 in their sights as being the new target, one that'd give'em a precious point in their relegation dog-fight. the home side fielders are gathered round the batters and the nonsense kicks-off: *wannabes*, "who?", *has-beens* and overweight immobile geriatrics all noising up 'loc batters - including two of the very type of youngsters scottish cricket says it's desperate to encourage to stay in the game - with suggestions that the 'loc were no longer trying to win the game but had, instead, decided to prevent the home side getting 2 more points in their quest for premier league glory. what a myopic, self-centered existence - "helllooo.....!" - the shocking news for the *glenpark all-stars* is that the 'loc batters couldn't give two-hoots about whether they did or didn't get 2 bonus points. what they *did* care about tho', was getting points for *their* side. "it really is tiresome.....". i'm glad the west district youth development officer and the cricket scotland youth performance manager can compartmentalise their lives to such an extent that on-field baiting of a couple of teenage tail-enders doesn't strike them as mutually exclusive to their day jobs! but, as i say, saturday was merely the most recent example of something that takes place in almost every sncl match these days - made all the more galling when, like today, the loudest noise emanates from a non-bowler with a career batting average of 11.42 [ed: you know who you are]! maybe i'm just an old corinthian who foolishly

thought we played this game for fun, a game where mutual respect was at the core. silly ol' me..... rant over.

to the game itself. the greenock innings, after being inserted, centered around pro' tim mcintosh's unbeaten 105, his ton coming in over 50. it was a chanceless knock that demonstrated great application and patience, on a difficult deck. well batted sir. around him there were quasi-cameos from the "injured" ex-scotland captain craig wright (26 off 42 balls) and greenock's international all-rounder sean weeraratna (23 off 20 balls). weeraratna, in addition to being a bowler of searing pace and guile, has evolved into an attacking, free-scoring middle order bat who's destined for a long and glittering career at the top of scottish cricket. [ed: many thanks to sean for emailing the aforementioned text to the website last friday.]

mcintosh's 105 represented more than half of the home side's eventual 209 for 6, a total that wasn't ungettable tho' if the 'loc batted well.

before an analysis of the fact that the 'loc then didn't bat well tho', a mention for mohsin ali's "4-for" - *mohsy* bowled well and grabbed the wickets of prabhu, berrington, crothswaite and wright.

to the 'loc innings: *bean* opened with saleem and things started well. the first five overs brought 21 runs without losing a wicket, including a *big mex'* maximum out of the ground. but then he tried one too many and holed out to tony judd who made a safe grab above his head at mid-off. 32 for 1. then it was 37 for 2 as atif tried, but failed, to follow sal's maximum-hitting antic, but tried, and succeeded, in following sal' in holing out to aa judd esq. who hadn't moved at mid-off. this brought *cheesy* out to join *bean* in the middle and these two brought stability to proceedings. taking the side safely to drinks, the two pushed the score up to 83 for 2 as over 25 came and went.

157 was known to be the first target to start collecting points and, at this juncture, this was a "shoe-in". eh, no it wasn't. by over 27 *both* batters were gone, *two* new were in and *all* momentum was gone. *cheesy* for some bizarre reason ran himself out,.....by some distance, to wicket-keeper crothswaite! and *bean* pulled tony judd's opening delivery, a long-hop, straight to brown at square-leg. sigh. and sigh again. from then on it was a familiar story. momentum gone, and never recovered, as batters came and went with a regularity that suggested *syrup of figs* had been on the tea menu. *hampo'* (7), *spenny* (4), *mohsy* (12), *maddy* (3) and *doogie* (0) added just 26 between'em leaving *imy* (28) to try and find the runs needed to secure just 1 bonus point.

as it was, the boys fell four short as *imy* skied a judd delivery to greenock's "other" mcintosh at mid-off. 153 all out, no points and another batting shambles best consigned to the bin.

and to rub salt in the wounds heriot's fp thumped *uddy*, grabbing 2 bonus points into the bargain. now it really is tickly at foot - the 'loc need another win and some decent bonus points to secure their prem 'div' status for 2008 and it looks like it'll go down to the wire - let's hope *uddy* "curl up, and die" as easily on match day 18 as they did at goldenacre today!?!

a tale of two 60s

the 'loc snuck home at home against northside rivals west of scotland in a nail-biter. set 203 to win, the visitors looked to be in with a shout of winning it when pro' barrington rowland and overseas am' tim mckay - who'd, effectively, won the first league encounter between the sides - were at the crease.

then, in over 27, the west pro's sent back after starting out on another quick single: the ball's at *cheesy's* feet, the ball's in his hands, it's in the air, it's heading for rowland's end, it's hit the timbers, big appeal, dowdall's finger - out! phew! and boy were the 'loc pleased to see the back of rowland.....or so they thought! before you could find.....sorry, *say*, "gavin gemmell", barri' was back.....as square-leg ump'! and then to the further astonishment of the 'loc players - and in a "dr. gemmell and mr. moores"

impersonation - barri' then proceeded to coach mckay and partners as to what to do?! astonishing! he didn't even wait until between overs, signalling between balls to west batters! [ed: to find out just *why* any player was umpiring, skip to the bottom.]

anyway - and at least in theory - tim mckay was now on his own and, despite rowland's on-field advice, *ladbrokes* stopped taking bets on an "away win". as it was tho', west's second-best aussie bowler on the day [ed: kev', don't let his bowling figures fool anyone!] couldn't quite get his side home as he ran out of teammates who could hold a bat.....oh, and then he lost number 11 kelso who came in, turned his back on two *hampo'* deliveries and then got cleaned up by *the cheese!* a win by 17 runs with *the mighty* grabbing two precious bonus points for skittling the oppo' out.

in the west reply the bowlers had shared the wickets around with *hampo'*, *cheesy*, *imy* and mohsin getting two a-piece. *hampo's* 10-1-26-2 stands out in economy terms too - well bowled skipper. and just as well with mr and mrs hampson *snr*: watching on! the only criticism on the day in the second innings continues to be the apparent nack of 'loc boys to "switch off" at times in the field and allow what look like innocuous shots trundle by or bounce of various body parts! and no mention'll be made of a couple of grassed catches early on that gave ian young two lives, or a couple of difficult stumping chances that went a-begging.

back then to the 'loc innings and, just as tim mckay's 60-odd *hadn't* been enough for west, atif's 63 *was* sufficient to see the 'loc home. atif was batting at three after zulfi' was a call off for the game, going in after sal' had holed out to a magnificent grab at cover point by ian young. idk has now taken three beaut's in the three encounters between the sides this year and it's becoming a little annoying! in fact, had he hit with a run out attempt after *hampo'* hit the ball to his right and set off for a suicidal single, maybe the ultimate result might've been different?

sal's departue had seen atif in at three as said and, riding his luck - he was dropped in consecutive balls when on 17 - he smacked the wee red sphere around the place on his way to his 63: 55 balls, four 6s and five 4s included. around him there were important innings from *bean* up top (32 - described by *the wee man* himself as taware-esque!), *hampo'* (28) and *spenny* (16*).

others chipped in too and the only other things worth mentioning are the unbelievable fact that tim mckay got five wickets bowling dross, and the fact that the 'loc tail looked intent on giving west two bonus points at the death as mohsin came and went in 8 balls, *maddy* faced just 8 too, and *doogie* came and went in just 1! luckily *youngy's* adept at the forward defensive and "leave" and demonstrated both in consecutive balls to keep the 2 points outta' reach.

so 12 points to *the mighty* and breathing space found - next week it's greenock away.

a final thought on this game: thanks to alex dowdalls who had to umpire this one on his tod after gavin gemell didn't appear - cheers alex, your contribution to the game going ahead and being played in good spirit is appreciated.

well, at least it was a point gained!

after the dust had settled on the 'loc's latest sncl league match [ed: this was around over 25 given from then on it was raining!] the 'loc gained a point on basement buddies heriot's fp and west of scotland. 210 was the threshold chasing the home side's 279 for 7 to get the first batting point and this achieved.....and greeted as if the win had been achieved!

and *muchas gracias* are due to mr majid haq in this regard as - in over 47 - he generously conceded 20 to *the mighty's* total, including 12 wides! thank you indeed. such was his generosity - added to jamie carruthers bowling throwing in two wides of his own in over 50 - that the last ball saw the 'loc needing a

4 to grab a second point! sadly *jc* then bowled a half tracker that stayed low and knocked over *youngy's* timbers to give the home side the 12 and not the 'loc 2. hey-ho.

but in truth the game - and the points - were lost in the first innings. the home side's 279 for 7 included three good innings and contributions from almost everyone else. con de lange top-scored with 75, followed by majid haq's 72 and omer hussain's 43. the latter two were, indeed, heavyweight contributions to add to their pro's near run-a-ball three-quarter ton. in fact hussain's 43 was at better than a run-a-ball, although he was dropped in the deep by mohsin when he was on 26.

other chances that went a-begging were a sharp chance to *the spen'* standing up and *maddy* losing one in the sun that nearly landed on his head! sigh - but, again, hey-ho. elsewhere in the field, the 'loc's limitations in this department were again exposed on a big paddock with a quick outfield and one short boundary. in all 31 4-run boundaries were hit and three 6s. that's 142, more than half the home side total.

as noted tho', everyone chipped in with all the *feegie* batters getting into double figures. on the bowling front it was a day when most of the bowlers would likely want to look away at this juncture. only *imy* went for less than "fives", with *maddy* and *mohsy* going at "sevens", altho' the former did grab four ferguslie scalps late on.

the 'loc reply resulted, as already said, in them reaching 220. ironically this was their best sncl total of the season. but, before we get too excited and run off to buy everyone drinks even at *giffer's* exorbitant prices, it has to be said the home side were content protecting the boundaries as it became clear this was the only way the 'loc could win it as the innings progressed. still 200+, with time spent in the middle for some, can only help as next saturday's "must-win"/"24-pointer" with west looms large.

cheese made 26 before nicking one to slip, zulf 34 (from 77 balls), *hampo'* 53 (from 64 balls) and *bean* 22 (from 28 balls) - all cameos bar *hampo's* in the context of the game, but time in the middle nonetheless. elsewhere, atif smacked 8 in 8 balls, sal' 12 in 37 and *imy* 3 in 10 before *spenny* and *maddy* put on 36 for the ninth wicket courtesy - in the main - of mr haq's generosity. cheers maj! *spenny* was then the said ninth man out, in the final over, robbing youngy of a "dnb" and leaving him and maddy to try and scabble a few more from the five remaining deliveries. seven were added but for the end of over 50 i would refer the honourable gentleman to the narrative already provided!

looking back at the 'loc innings as a whole the boys could again be accused of becoming becalmed in key sections. as exhibit a: the third wicket goes down in over 22, a new batter's in and the next fourteen overs see only 28 added. doing the math as they say in the states, that'd mean - to win - the 'loc would have to have got 252 off the other 36. that's 7-an-over!

so a point gained, and the fight continues. next week really is "win-or-bust" and the bowling and fielding, and batting, [ed: is there anything else?] must be better.

ren-frew it away with batting collapse

obviously knowing how tricky the 'loc find it these days to put together anything like a decent total batting, renfrew proved the perfect guests at shawholm on wednesday in the west league cup by getting themselves skittled out for just 60, thereby posting a total even the mighty can reach these days:-)

that said, mind you, when it was 9 for 2 in reply with *cheesy* and sal' back in the hutch [ed: must be a big hutch!] the 'loc faithful watching in the evening sunshine must've started to wonder!

the evening had started so well. sun. no rain. temperature above 10 degrees. and, an oppo' that doesn't cry off! renfrew had first "dig" and got off to a flyer with ex-locster mahmood alam and opening partner ahmed striking the ball cleanly. so effective were they that *cheese* was removed from the attack

after just one over and it was mohsin and imran that settled in to contain the visitors. but then, after racing out of the traps, the breakthrough came with *moody* chipping *mohsy* to mo' saeed at mid-on. first wicket down.

and really this was when the collapse started - in true 'loc style the renfrew batters came and went like *new labour* pledges - lots of good intentions, big targets in mind but, ultimately, short-lived. rebuttals on the message board *spen!* 18 for 1 became 27 for 4, became 42 for 7, became 60 all out as *mohsy* ran riot with a "4-for" and the 'loc fielders held on to everything. *doogie* took two good grabs, as did *spen'* whose two standing up were top-drawer. *youngy* sneaked a run out and mo' cleaned things up by bowling number eleven, majeed. majeed and moody were joined in the renfrew ranks by afzal umeed to make it a triumverate of ex-losters facing their old club.

61 to win then and *cheese* and sal' opening. *cheesy* stroked a nice boundary in over one before smacking a full toss straight down alam's throat at "cow corner". sal' meanwhile missed a straight one from renfrew's saeed and returned to pack up having made just 1. it was left to mo' and atif to bring some calm to proceedings and, batting sensibly, they did so. and when mo' became his namesake's second victim of the match *bean* nipped in to grab a sheriff (18*) and see the 'loc home with atif unbeaten on 26.

a good knock from atif therefore after *cheesy's* and saleem's woes continued. the win sees the 'loc safely through to the semi's with west, where the oppo's likely to be *uddy* and ferguslie. a skoosh then!

what's there to say that's not been said?

here's the gist of sunday's horror show in "the scottish" - feel free to skip over to something more uplifting, say a *youtube* video on self-harm, when you think i'm repeating myself!

1. 'loc bat first
2. 'loc collapse - this time it was 34 for 4
3. 'loc fail to recover - 61 for 7 becoming 89 all out
4. 'loc bowl and field well and take early oppo' wickets
5. one oppo' player digs and grinds out "a score"
6. 'loc lose and are left wishing they'd scored just a few more.

yup, deja vu meets *groundhog day!*

[for those not already on *youtube*] here's the tale of the torture: the 'loc lost the toss and found themselves inserted. a new opening combo' of atif and *bean* was tried - both having made a few the day before against grange's pop-gunners. sadly this wasn't to be a good omen as atif was adjudged lbw by mac' wylie in over one! hmm. *bean* then found himself with the skipper - sadly [ed: there's that word again!] *hampo'* chose to shoulder his bat to a cran delivery and found his off stump disturbed: 3 for 2 and we'd only had ten balls. *hampo'* out, *cheesy* in and a brief - key word - period of stability as *the robster* looked to be in control. eight overs passed fairly uneventfully before, having moved onto 16 with three 4s already to his name, rob' missed another cran straight one and was cleaned up too. 21 for 3.

at this stage *youngy* - the only "night watchman" in world limited overs cricket - was again hurriedly sent in. he and *bean* had added almost 50 the day previously and the same was requested. and things again seemed to settle, and a few runs were added, before, with the score on 34, *bean* cut max ralston straight to ian young at point, where *youngy's* namesake snaffled the catch. hmm again. *youngy* was then joined by *the big mex'* and the two again tried to settle things. but five overs later: disaster - sal' nicked one to robertson behind the sticks as cran picked up his third victim. sal' out, *spen'* in. *spenny* had had an "interesting" decision against grange and so was determined to stick in; a determination made all the greater when he was met by a bizarre crescendo of noise from the west fielders upon his arrival in the middle - so much so that ump' sandy scotland queried just when it would end? anyway, whether it had

any impact at all, *spen's* weekend just got worse as he nicked his fourth ball to 'keeper robertson too. cran a "4-for" and *youngy* his third partner of the over! his new batting compatriot? mohsin, in at eight.

the period to drinks was then safely negotiated, only for *youngy* to mistime a pull off kahler immediately afterwards to tim mckay at midwicket. 61 for 7 and *youngy's* stubborn occupation had been ended in pretty tame fashion by kahler's long-hop [ed: read it and weep kev!]. mohsin tho' was determined to play his shots and hit a 6 and a 4 before holing out to ian young for the latter's second catch of the innings, out for 23....the bowler that man cran again - "5-for".

mohsin departure came just after imran who'd come and gone for 7 inside fifteen minutes. this left *maddy* and *the huss'* to scramble 12 for the final wicket leaving the 'loc all out 89. "must do better" would be on the report card.

chasing 90 to win must've been viewed as "straight forward" in the away dressing room at tea, but when it was 17 for 3 things maybe had a different complexion? watson had been trapped lbw for 0, ian young had managed 1, and robertson had made 13. the latter including an outrageous edged - yes, edged - maximum over backward point off a free hit after *cheesy* had front-foot no-balled. suddenly the unlikely seemed possible. 29 for 4 further improved home supporters' moods as overseas amateur [ed: but very definitely *professional* nonsense talker!] tim mckay departed after nicking *hampo'* to *spen'*. four down - two wickets each for *the cheese* and *hamp's*.

west's pro' barrington rowland had strode out when robertson departed - you could tell *the wee man* was coming as you could see the grass move - and his was the wicket the 'loc wanted; nay, *needed*. he had scored a ton in the earlier sncl encounter to win his side *that* match and a similar pivotal role would be needed. he was in with leggat now and, with the latter in the *youngy* role [ed: sorry *spegsie!*], the two set about grinding out the necessary runs.

21 were added in ten overs, but crucially no wickets fell - the momentum was switching. then 23 were added in the next ten....again without a casualty. things were now looking very much in west's favour: 29 overs gone and it was now 74 for 4 - required recovery completed methinks. and as if to prove they were no longer needed, rowland then departed in over 32, whilst *spegsie* followed him in 33. but rowland's 44 had been enough; *spegsie's* gritty 12 ideal support.

this left youngster brown, and richard windows, to "close the door" [ed: sic!] on the 'loc's scottish cup campaign as the remaining runs were ground out. the winning run was edged in over 36 off *cheesy's* fifth over.

bright spots? hard to find'em,.....and trust me i'm looking guys! the fielding was pretty good i guess, with *the huss'* again proving he an asset in this department - his catch to get rid of ian young being a good one, as was *spenny's* to dismiss mckay and *hampo's* to send robertson packing. the ground fielding too, probably gets a pass. the bowling? all fine: *cheesy* grabbed two wickets, while *hampo'* got a "3-for" and *bean* bowled his ten overs for just 13. but yet again this was all to no avail as, quite simply, not enough runs were gathered when batting.

next up the 'loc are in rowan cup action at hughenden, before another key sncl match against ayr at new cambusdoon. players are asked to bring runs with them.....

a decent start still seems completely out of grange

regular readers of this column [ed: thanks dad] will know that the "complete the following sequence" question has been asked on a number of occasions this season. most commonly it's asked about the 'loc's score when wicket four goes down. looking back over the season's completed sncl matches, the sequence reads as follows: 93, 77, 72, 84, 43, 41, 56. so, bar a couple of blips, your scribe doesn't believe it's unfair to suggest the sequence is headed pretty much due south! so another saturday and

another chance for the 'loc to pull out their collective batting compasses and change direction. this time the oppo' was grange and shawholm was the venue. and having lost the toss the 'loc batters chance was to start at 1pm.

but, i'm afraid to report that our sequence remains unbroken, compasses unredirected and we're still aboard the good ship *discovery*. yup, this time it was 26 for 4 - yes, you read it correctly, twenty-six for four. and then, for good measure, another two wickets fell before 31 was on the 'board! yikes, now that's a real collapse. the victims had been '*dush*'(3), mohsin (12), *cheese* (0, ball one), *the mex*'(9), *hampo*'(5) and *the spen*'(0, ball three). and against grange's somewhat tame attack this must rank right up there amongst the real "shockers".

and talking of shockers brings us to.....no, we won't go there shall we.

30 for 6 it was, and so to add the bizarre to the ridiculous the skipper promoted *youngy* to number eight. *youngy*'s entrance to the arena was a feat in itself having had at least 30 seconds notice - think *clark kent* and 'phone boxes! anyway he joined *bean* in the middle and the somewhat obvious plan to "hang around a bit" was hatched. this they did, adding 48 for the seventh wicket, *youngy* succumbing to a mistimed sweep to be caught by gregor maiden at mid-wicket for 21 - *ginge*' caught *ginge*'. *bean* continued to play sensibly tho' and passed 30. he did, however, have to listen to new partner *imy* tell him they had to bat out a few more overs before then immediately trying to smash meakin out of the ground, holing out straight to mid-in!

this brought atif in as *bean*'s new partner and he played a cameo innings grabbing 22 from just 32 balls, including two 6s. *bean* eventually was adjudged lbw to be out for 38, letting *the huss* in - he managed 1 before being cleaned up by maiden.

score? 131 all out in only 42.2 overs. sigh.

the grange reply was ultimately straight forward as they lost only two wickets. but it could've been more. it was 1 for 1 when neil maccrae was given out lbw and number three mccallum was hugely fortunate he wasn't given out the same way next over when *hampo*' rapped him on the pad - arguably a better shout than the one given against maccrae. then '*dush*' grassed a catch at square leg that would've seen off gregor maiden, whilst mohsin and sal' saw catching opportunities go a-begging. throw in any number of edges that maiden managed to either nick between slip and gully, or get along the ground, and it just wasn't ever going to be.

the second wicket to fall went down on 71, *macca*' stumped by *spenny* off *monty*. this tho' just brought george bailey in and he carried on where he'd left off at the grange earlier in the season - in fact he finished things off by hitting *beanie* for two 6s in over 24 to finish unbeaten on 35 from just 22 balls, including three 4s and three 6s! sigh again.

so the league form continues to frustrate - heads wouldn't be allowed to fall tho' as west of scotland await in 24 hours on the same deck.....oh, and at least clydesdale and west lost too!

"dark side" defeated.....at last

wednesday night was west league cup night and with the webmaster nowhere to be found it was left to others to tell the tale of the season's first win for *the rebel alliance* against those from *toytown*.

batting first, the 'dale lost wickets at regular intervals and, quickly, found themselves 25 for 2 with openers sher and hislop out for 9 and 2 respectively. pro' sajid steadied the ship a little tho' with a twenty-ball 14, whilst qasim sheikh's seventeen-ball 22 suggested a recovery might be on the cards.....but it wasn't, tee! hee!

43 for 3 was the score when sajid was bowled by mo' saeed, and when craig smith was run out by 'dush' it was 51 for 4. but sheikh, couldn't be [ed: think about it guys!] until, with the 'board showing 63, the 'dale skipper hit *beanie* to *hampo'*, out!

63 for 5 then sparked a collapse of 'loc sncl standards: 64 for 6, 66 for 7, 76 for 8 with monroe, zeeshan bashir and ellis being the victims. hari' singh managed to hang on in there tho' and, despite number ten ali being run out by mo' for 4, he and last man fulton saw the 'dale to the full twenty overs. the score? 91 for 9.

the 'loc's run chase started well enough with mohsin and *the cheese* opening. 18 was on the 'board before mohsin was stumped by andy hislop off singh's bowling, and *cheese* would get to 14, and the total 33, before wicket number two fell. said cheese being run out.

mo' added 12, and sal' and *spen'* just 6 and 7 respectively before *hampo'* and *bean* found themselves together. the skipper started slowly coming in with the score on 47 for 4, but, with *bean*, batted sensibly grabbing 1s and 2s as they came along. the 'loc were there-or-thereabouts with the run rate too, although after eighteen overs they still needed 14 to win.

over nineteen saw only 1 gained from its first four balls tho' and so it was then 13 from eight. until that is *hampo'* stuck ball five over the rope! nice. another single found him on strike at the start of zeeshan bashir's and the 'dale's last over. and guess what? yup, ball one went the distance too! a 'loc win with five balls to spare.

i tell you what dear reader, this cup business is a skoosh!

'loc win in trampoline contest

the 'loc started their west league cup campaign with a *twenty20* win over coatbridge side drumpellier on wednesday evening. on a night cold enough to have *youngy* wearing his beanie hat under his cap before going out to field, with drizzle in the air from time-to-time, and with a deck more suited to practising chinese and russian pre-prubescent gymnasts, it was nevertheless good to finally get the cup campaign underway.

batting first the 'loc started with *cheesy* back in the opening slot along side *maddy*. unfortunately neither lasted too long as the 'loc's batting frailties continue to show up with the regularity of the *70 shilling* being off in the clubhouse! this time it was 21 for 3 with *maddy*, *cheesy* and then mo' saeed - who was back in action - all coming and going like,....well like frustrated *70 shilling* drinkers at shawholm. 11, 7 and 2 were the respective scores as *cheese* was trapped lbw, and *maddy* and mo' gave up catches.

but it must be said in their [any batter's] defence batting on a trampoline when there's a wind chill factor ain't easy. after the threesome's departure zulfi' and saleem added 23 before, on 20, sal' miss-timed one and became catch number three of the innings. this brought the skipper in and he and zulf' batted nicely, running well and keeping the scoreboard [ed: such that there was - just who is *monklands cricket club??*] ticking. 57 was added before *hampo'* departed - cleaned up trying to hit the ball back to shawholm.

mohsin then proved penguins really can't run as he was run out for 2, leaving zulfi' to add a few with *spenny* at the death. zulfi' ended up unbeaten on 39, *spen'* on 4. 118 was the target...and it was getting really cold now!

drumps' aussie opener lewis can't have played in conditions like this often,...even in scotland and so when a length ball from *hampo'* lept at him in over one and looped to *youngy* in the covers methinks he might've been secretly pleased to mozey off back to the pavilion.

it was then a mohammed combo' as the *ex-drumps*, *ex-uddy*, *now-drumps* again brothers-in-arms tried to build a base for their side's run chase. however mohammed #2 didn't find things easy as he chipped *beanie* to salem to become the second casualty of the reply. in fact, bar mohammed #1, none of the home batters, until pro' mccarthy came in at six, would "get in" or look at home. allison went for 11, and *ex-drumps*, *ex-uddy*, *now-drumps* again mclaren for 1. but mohammed and mccarthy then added 53 for the fifth wicket - mohammed cleaned up by mo' for 47.

mccarthy then watched keltie go first ball, before guiding young josh' allison thru' to "time" - the reply finishing on 95 for 6, some 23 behind the 'loc.

so a win in game #1, games #2 and #3 are next week: the "dark side" and west await.

what a difference a day makes

the 'loc grabbed a little piece of cup glory at shawholm on sunday as they emerged as 2007's scottish region winners of the prestigious ecb cockspur cup. against a much depleted grange side (their 1st xi was in scottish cup action against weirs), the 'loc racked up 326 for 3 in their 45 overs batting first before skittling out their edinburgh visitors for just 110.

despite the mis-match nature of the game there were some positives: the 'loc managed to play and bowl a number of youngsters in *maddy*, *'lexy* and *the huss'*. while - on the batting front - *bean* spent much-needed time in the middle and was hugely unfortunate to be adjudged run out by ump' brian papworth when on 99. ouch. his run out brought to an end a massive 207-run second wicket partnership with zulf who went on to notch his second ton of the season, adding 109 to his pre-season 103*.

zulf's 100 came off a very respectable 101 balls. mind you in the context of what was to come when *bean* departed, zulf's run rate looked positively pedestrian. *the big mex'* had been skulking around waiting to get going for nigh on 30 overs and was clearly in a hurry when he arrived in the middle. a mere 22 balls after arriving he had to acknowledge the applause of the 'loc faithful after 6 number seven sailed over the ropes to bring up his 50. he then smashed another two maximums off the last balls of the 'loc innings to finish unbeaten on 71 in what was more than just a cameo at the death. the way he started off there was a chance he might beat zulf' to his ton was one wag's comment from the spectator benches!

in reply the grange side didn't really get going. four guys got into double figures with opener gordon top-scoring with a patient 26, fellow opener banks - who looked pretty compact - getting 18, number three de boulay notching up 23, and aamer making it to 11. a mention also for de boulay in another context: his catch a short cover to get rid of the unfortunate *maddy* was out of that drawer labelled "top" - a breath-taking one-hander to his right as a meakin full toss was despatched by madushan. genuinely breath-taking.

after the fifth wicket went down on 101 tho' it was a collapse of 'loc proportions that resulted in the visitors being all out 110. three ducks saw to that and the innings was finished off by a young-spence run out combo' seeing to scottish cricket's longest-named player: prasad ksheerabdinatha.....if i had the time i'd prove his surname was an anagram of "made up name"!

best on the bowling front was mohsin with his "4-for", although atif's 9-4-15-1 is also worthy of mention - well bowled.

the next round of the comp' now sees the mighty travel to dan-land, sorry england, to take on the winners of the north-east region - ah well, it'll be a nice wee day out i suppose!

"were they [almost] poloc in disguise?"

sigh. another sncl match, another batting shambles.

most weeks tho' the shambles-inducing disappointment reported in this column is concluded - and offset - by a comment along the lines "at least *the 'dale'*"dark side" lost". sadly when the oppo' is said "dark side" that tag line's not available. sigh.

toytown titwood was the venue for the season's first sncl encounter between the forces of good and the "dark side". said "dark side" have a new *uber-fuhrer* this year tho' in the form of qasim sheikh. qasim could play a big part in the 'dale's eventual win, but when the 'loc boys arrived at first they thought maybe there was a scotland game on, and they'd arrived on the wrong day, given mr sheikh being attired top to bottom, and outside to in, in saltires freebies. [ed: and in case you're interested qasim's number's 22 apparently!]

to the game: after *hampo'* had won the toss the 'loc decided to bowl first. the deck was green-looking and damp'ish, and it looked a good shout. and, after seventeen overs and the home side floundering on 49 for 6 (yes, six!) it looked an exceptional shout. at this stage it had been the *hampo'* and *spen'* show as the skipper had pocketed three 'dale batter scalps, and the *spen'* had four pouches to his name - are you reading this *stubbsy?* nice, and murmurs of "are you poloc in disguise?" were being heard around *toytown*.

but number 22 was still in, and he'd been joined by another saltire-kitted-out stormtrooper, ross lyons. the 'loc were looking to force home their advantage and were looking for wicket #7. and then a turning point: imran to lyons, *blondie* goes back and tries a flick to leg, ball misses bat and collides with shins, huge appeal....."not out". said turning point.

lyons and sheikh add 40 for the seventh wicket and, both, relieve the pressure and shift the momentum. then zeeshan bashir scores 32 - at nine - to add 46 for the ninth wicket before shiekh holes out to a great catch from *g'* over his head running out from mid-wicket off atif's bowling.

then another turning point: over 50 and 'dale last man afzal on strike. *the cheese* is bowling and the score at the start's 147. five balls later the score's 162 as afzal's smacked 4, 2, 4, 4 off balls #2, 3, 4 and 5. Not good, but worse still ball #6 involves a running mix up by the 'dale batters as the ball is fielded by *cheese* off his own bowling. bashir's halfway down the track and *cheese* - from around four yards - rolls the ball back at the stumps. a hit's worth 2 points.....the ball rolls past. ouch.

162 for 9 it is then and the 'loc are looking at just over three-an-over to win. 49 for 6 had somehow been transformed into a decent total and the answer to the murmured question was now known: "no". [ed: check back if you've forgotten it people!]

changing the top order to try and improve the recent horrible run of starts, *hamp's* sends in *maddy* with the *spen'*. the latter however falls cheaply and it's 25 for 1 - out for 2, but *maddy's* scoring quickly. zulf' batted three as usual and joined *maddy*, but the two put on just 7 before *maddy* nicked one behind to hislop. this in itself was disappointing, but to be caught by the teflon-gloved hislop on a day when he had a 'mare was a bitter pill to swallow for *dush'*.

32 for 2 then became 56 for 4 [ed: a-ha it *was* the 'loc batting second!] as *hampo'* went for just 1 and *cheesy* - batting five - fell after a 10-ball 19. sigh.

but the game was still winnable and zulf' was looking in the mood. sal' had joined him in the middle and what was needed was to keep the scoreboard ticking over. the fourth wicket had fallen in over seventeen and sal' and zulf' would stay together until *the mex'* was adjudged leg before in over 37. twenty overs. q. the run return? a. 41. was it enough? answers on a postcard. the duo's partnership had seen bashir twirling away at one end, and 'dale pro' sajid at the other, for most of it, with overs 27 to 37 seeing only ten (yes 10!) runs scored. sigh.

saleem's departure with the score on 97 brought *monty* in. after breaking the end off his bat, imran then immediately smacked a ball down long-off's throat ball #4. sigh. 97 for 7. then it was for 8 as *bean* came and went for 2. 100 for 7.

atif was in now and batting as only he can - that means it's never dull as *mr a* tries to hit every ball out of the ground. and, after he and zulf had added 29, atif tried one yahoo too many as a full toss from ross lyons was pouched by greg williamson on the square-leg boundary.

the equation as this stage was, therefore, 34 needed off 30 balls, and zulf' was still very much "in". so it was, in effect, a-run-a-ball when *'lexy* strode out to the middle. opening bowler afzal was back into the attack and was raring to go. ball #1 was too good for *'lexy* tho' as his middle stump went head over heels out of the ground towards andy hislop. andy wasn't in any danger tho' as he'd not managed to get in the way of anything all afternoon! scott out, young in - just when will youngy get a "dnb"?

the next twelve balls saw 7 runs added, and so over 48 started with 27 needed off 18. still do'able and the 'loc were accumulating a point every 8 runs as they closed in on the their target. but then hopes were dashed as zulf' - who'd been there since the eighth over - holed out to williamson off the first ball of afzal's penultimate over. sigh.

another defeat, another batting shambles, another case of "what might've been?" and evidence yet again that sighs matter – boom, boom! the 'dale middle order and tail had shown what could be achieved with application on what was not the easiest of decks. and credit must go to number 22 for his key part in this.....did you know he plays for the saltires by the way??

the only good news? west got cuffed too, and heriot's sneaked just three points as their game against carlton was washed out.

bean's 100% record intact! read it and weep hampson! :-)

keith sheridan's immaculate record as stand-in skipper of the 'loc remained intact after sunday's cockspur cup triumph over a gutsy forfarshire side. batting first the 'loc - for the first time in weeks - posted a decent total. 197 for 4 was hardly the stuff of clubhouse legend but it certainly - in 45 overs - wouldn't be a target the oppo' would canter to reach. nope, it'd have to be really won this time.

the target had been posted thanks in the main to 67 from *maddy* who opened with *bean*. the latter got stuck in the 'teens again and was "*caught garden, bowled tilstor*" for the second time in this fixture. how so? well in the eventually-abandoned first attempt to play this tie, bean was dismissed in actually the same manner, at the same end.....mind you he'd managed 15 more runs this time! 52 for 1 was the scoreboard readout when *bean* departed square left.

zulf' joined *'dush*' in the middle. *the big man* could currently be excused for not taking quick singles as his pockets are weighed down with cash as he tries - and fails - to buy a run. unfortunately the forf's match wasn't to be the day when he'd cash in either. *zulf*'s poor trot continued when he was swung across the line at a mohammed delivery and was cleaned up for 6. hang in there mr s - class always tells in the end!

zulf's demise with the score on 67 brought *sal*' into bat and, with the exception of some *keystone cops*'esque calling and running between the wickets, he and *maddy* played well together and added 69 for the third wicket. *maddy* was the one to go: bizarrely the mirror image of bean's dismissal - "*caught tilston, bowled gardner*".

5 runs later *the big mex*' joined *'dush*' in the hutch and it was left to *monty* and *spen*' to find the 46 additional runs added to post 197. both players provided the healthy crowd with delightful cameos: one

spence square cut to the backward point boundary, in particular, drawing generous applause from the spectators.....except *bean* who muttered he'd hit *his* in *front* of square! 197 it was tho'.

forf's opened their run chase steadily....steadily that is after graeme garden's opening partner, wallace, was the victim of a horror ball that didn't bounce and trapped him in front. brian papworth almost didn't have to give the decision as wallace hung his head and started back to the pavilion. and this wouldn't be the last dribbler to produce an lbw either - read on.

garden and tony weed then added 18 before the latter nibbled at a madushan delivery and was caught at first slip by *bean*. umair mohammed then joined garden in the middle and these two slowly brought forf's right into contention. 95 for 2 after 27 overs meant the visitors needed just 103 off the remaining 18 overs at under a run-a-ball with eight wickets in hand. certainly do'able. and luck seemed to be on their side as mohammed had been bowled by imran off a no-ball, had been fortuitously adjudged "not out" after nicking one to *spenny* and had survived a *bona fide* stumping chance after dancin' down the track, missing, only for *spen'* to fumble allowing him to get back. extraordinary - but sometimes it's your day. a bit of luck was probably due the 'loc's way therefore. and it came in the 28th over.

arran bowled a leg-side long hop that failed to bounce, garden tried to adjust and sweep it square only to over-balance forward and give *spen'* the proverbial stumping off a wide! ouch. this certainly turned things the home side's way as mohammed saw a procession of partners come and go at the other end before he, too, was a spence stumping victim [ed: are you reading this stubbsy??] - off atif's bowling. atif bowled well in fact - his eventual figures of 9-0-26-3 reflecting this.

mohammed's departure with the score on 132 was the beginning of the end and forf's were all out 29 runs later as *'lexy* cleaned up the tail: tilston getting a ball that went bounce, dribble, pad, out; and last man quinn smashing one down *maddy's* throat at mid-off.

so a win; and a decent performance to boot. probably *maddy* gets m.o.t.m. with his 67, two wickets, a run out and a grab. next week it's the scottish final as grange come-a-calling [ed: i've heard they can't win in the sncl either?].

have i mentioned *deja vu* before?

incredibly lightning struck for the sixth time at shawholm on saturday as the 'loc yet again failed to post a decent enough score to trouble the oppo'. this time the other side was carlton, and this time the fourth wicket fell with the 'board showing just 41. yikes.

if i go on to say, dear reader, that *extras* was second top scorer [ed: mind you it did get 44!] and only two batters got into double figures you'll be beginning to form the kind of mental pictures that inspired much of *andy warhol's* work, and best conjure up the 'loc's scorecard.

with only *hampo'* really contributing (with 68), the rest can hang their collective heads. the bottom of the 'card looked like the answers to a binary multiple choice exam paper! sigh indeed. 152 was never likely to be enough and so it turned out with the 'loc eventually losing inside 40 overs with carlton four down. let's get to the detail then.

the visitor's skip' cedric english won the coin flip and the 'loc were batting - he'd obviously looked at recent scorecards and banked on the 'loc's top-order being a tad fragile. and he was right. *cheesy* went first as he chopped a wide one on to his timbers. *zulf'* then went for 2, *bean* for 3 and *spen'* for the same score. the aforementioned 41 for 4. but not content with nipping under 50 for the first four, the 'loc then lost wicket #5 with only 44 on the 'board - *sal'* clipping one to cover for just 2.

monty then made 9 before being cleaned up by carlton pro' wooden, and the next three made 1 a-piece - that's *atif*, *'lexy* and *maddy* for the record. 97 for 9 then, and *youngy* in in the dizzy heights of over 33. bonkers.

but *hampo'* was still at the other end and so there was still some hope of a sensible - if not challenging - total if *youngy* could hold his end up. this he did and *g'* went on to bat beautifully to reach 68 with two balls left. then ball 49.5 was sent down by stevie gilmour: leg-side half volley. the *g'* flicked it nicely off his pads.....straight down the throat of the only carlton fielder between third man and "cow corner" - unlucky. but well batted sir. the last pair had managed to add 55; *youngy's* 10* being by far the junior contribution.

153 to win then.

opening for carlton were english and gilmour. the latter had played the more fluently when he tried sweeping *monty* with the score on 39, missed it, and was adjudged lbw. but it could've been an earlier breakthrough had english nicking one to *spen'* in garry's first over resulted in the carlton skipper's demise. but it wasn't to be. and it wasn't to be throughout the carlton innings as other catches were grassed: another by *spen'*, one by *hamp's* and one by *cheesy*. none regulation, and when you're on a bad trot they just don't stick. in fact the one *youngy* grabbed at square leg to eventually get rid off english almost didn't stick either as he performed his now customary juggle before pouching it. english had been second out with the score on 72. this left wooden in with lockie.

bryn scratched around for 21 before hitting *bean* to *cheesy* - another *chees'* and *bean* dismissal; whereas wooden hung in there to the end. he did however have two additional partners: jamie kerr came and went for just 3, before overseas amateur griggs [ed: more like greggs, given they're full of mince pies too!] joined him in the middle. over 40 saw the fat lady sing [ed: griggs' girlfriend maybe?] and the 'loc had lost by 6 wickets.

importantly the dropped catches had also meant that it was a point-less afternoon. thank goodness west and heriot's lost too - for once *the dark side* and greenock did the 'loc favours! next week, talking of *the dark side*, it's the 'loc versus the *crossmyloof xi* at *toytown titwood*.

is there such a thing as *deja vu* about *deja vu*??

the 'loc's poor league run continued against the *greenock all-stars* on saturday in the sncl. shawholm was a picture as play got underway with *mossy* having done a great job to get an eminently playable deck despite the week previous's rains. the 'loc would have first go on the strip, with greenock's opening bowlers wright and weeraratna commencing proceedings for the visitors. so: *cheese* and *bean* versus wright and weeraratna - "play".

and so to *deja vu* of *deja vu!* the 'loc's top order just can't seem to get a start. and writing about this recurring problem is now starting to affect my pc: as i type things like "early wickets fell", "the top order succumbed", etc. microsoft word is now underlining it in green assuming it's a grammatical error, my repeating a phrase! and so it was: 77 for 4 versus grange became 72 for 4 against ayr, became 84 for 4 at hamilton crescent, became saturday's 43 for 4! sigh. this week's victims were *cheesy* (9), *zulf'* (3), *hampo* (0) and *bean* (19) as - principally - dougie wylie caused all sorts of carnage. but this is where *deja vu* ends: at least in the previous matches some sort of recovery has been mounted. saturday's encounter saw only collapse. bar *spenny's* dogged 18, the rest of the batters could muster only 36 between'em as the 'loc were all out for 100 after 49 overs. not only had it been a shocking batting display, it had been a *turgidly slow* shocking batting display. turnstiles aren't likely to be on the club's wish list anytime soon i fear.

in fact the highlight of the whole innings had taken place right at the start when, after being asked by *zulf'* to move the screens, the greenock players refused - pointblank. bizarre - maybe the *all-stars* have

people who do that for them at the glendome. the incident was all done-and-dusted in about three minutes but did, for a part of it, resemble the cuban missile crisis with *zulf*' playing kennedy to wright's kruschev! who'd blink first? luckily some 'loc spectators joined in as the u.n, moved the screen and the incident passed peacefully :-)

for the *all-stars*, *west's* wrighty returned the astounding figures of 10-5-9-2 and *kelburne's* wylie finished 10-3-18-4, whilst *heriot's'* maclaren and weeraratna, and the *aussie "cannon & ball"* duo of mcintosh and judd, all bowled very tidily. in fact maclaren's 6-1-12-2 would probably, on any other day, grab the headlines.

so to the 'loc's attempt to win it despite the odds. quick wickets were what was needed, combined with tight bowling and good [improved] fielding. the last was achieved, with zaeem, atif and new boy *'lexy* showing good effort and no little ability. *'lexy's* stop at cover was a particular highlight of a good sncl debut in the field for young master scott. elsewhere imran and *bean* both bowled well, the former returning wylie'esque figures of 10-6-13-2. and it might've been 3 after *monty* just failed to hold on to a smart return catch of his own bowling. the greenock reply was, however, and ultimately, pretty routine: they snapped up the win with a taxiful of overs left unused. top scorer was fraser watts with 31, but everyone bar prabhu got to double figures, and all the greenock batters kept the scoreboard ticking over.

the bowling analyses show *cheesy* took a bit of stick, going at six plus an over, but, generally, the bowling was okay.

so, another game gone and only 1 bonus point to show for it. the good news is that it was no better a weekend for the sides below the 'loc with both west and heriot's crashing too. next up it's form side carlton, again at shawholm. i wonder if that'll be the match that the 'loc post a total - it's gonna' happen, and when it does you'll say "i knew that would happen".....deja vu!

injuries jinx the 'loc as league frailties continue

as ever you can look at any game of cric 'in a number of different ways. what were the turning points? dropped catches. missed stumpings or run outs. poor fielding or wayward bowling. what about bad match management or lack of centration when at the crease? there's a always something - often a combination of things - that see a game swing one way or another. and saturday's sncl premier division clash between the 'loc and west at hamilton crescent was no different. but, perhaps, the most telling factors - in the end - were two injuries. both happened in the 'loc reply - a run chase that would see them fall 17 short chasing 221 for 7.

injury #1

an innocuous shot is played into the ring where west's barton is fielding. barton moves smoothly to his left to field and collapses in agony. result: what appeared to be ankle ligament damage, an injury that would see him confined to the slips for the rest of game. why did this have an impact on the match's outcome tho'? the answer: west pro', barrington rowland, who was standing at slip after his 101 is despatched to field in barton's position. fast forward a couple of overs and *cheesy*, who's hit 41 off 34 balls, skies a tim mckay delivery over the bowler's head only to watch with horror as the west pro' makes good ground from where he's now posted to pouch the catch comfortably. then, to add insult to injury [ed: pardon the pun!] rowland then scoops up a well-struck *zulf*' off drive at mid-off and throws down the stumps at the bowlers' end with help of mckay to run out *hamp's* for a blob. unbelievable, and all because barton was hurpling in the slip cordon.

injury #2

the 'loc reply's managed - overall - to fairly well keep up to pace with the asking rate. 4 or 5-a-over have been plundered and saleem and *spenny* are in. *the spen's* batted beautifully to nurse *the mex'* thru' the

overs - a finish is definitely on, and tho' brian has succumbed and been dismissed by mark gilchrist for 46, *sal's* still in and in charge. he'd moved on to 57 off just 64 balls and had just despatched gilchrist for 13 in over 46. the requirement was now 31 off 4 - 31 from 24 balls. ian cran was to bowl over 47. the first ball saw a single run, the second another one and it was just then something gave.....*mex's* hammy. ouch. *the big man* was in pain. a runner was called for and it was clear saleem wasn't going to be able to move much, if at all. five minutes elapsed and cran started his run in. 29 from 22 is the requirement. cran to the static, in pain, *mex'* bang, straight 6! unbelievable. it's now 23 from 21 but *the mex'* is definitely struggling. ball #4 of cran's over: bang, ball in the air, gilchrist on the long-on boundary, ball pouched, saleem out. what might have been had he been able to move we'll never know but again it seemed cruel that an injury had intervened in proceedings.

after *sal's* demise, matt managed a run-a-ball 4 runs before he unluckily holed out at "cow" and zaeem was dismissed first ball, lbw to cran, to end things. very disappointing and the gap between west and *the mighty* at the foot of the sncl table narrows.

thank goodness heriot's lost too.

as noted, earlier, the home side had posted 221 for 7 batting first. this owed everything to west's pro' rowland who compiled an almost chance-less 101. and, tellingly, *the wee man's* innings included no fewer than 39 in singles and 20 in two's as he clocked the 'loc's fielding *achille's heal* early on and ran the ball around the wide open space that is hamilton crescent. throw in some poor ground fielding, the [sadly] oft-occurring lack of concentration and game management, and the [combined] "fifth bowler" returning figures of 10-0-75-0 and you start to get the picture.

and when the home side's innings finished, 59 for 3 at drinks seemed but a distant memory. yes, the 'loc had had a great start - greg watson, barton and ian young had all gone cheaply and the pro' had been kept in check. rowland managed only 20 from his first 50 deliveries. but the impetus couldn't be kept up and 162 was plundered in the second half.

"great start" might also attach itself as a label to the 'loc's batting too: 47 for 1 in the tenth was a great start with *cheesy* going like a train. in fact when he holed out, frustratingly again in the 40s, he'd scored 41 of the 47 on the 'board. and the middle part of the 'loc innings tho' saw things grind to a halt for periods. almost unbelievably, west's cameron bowled his five overs for no runs: *zero, zip, nada* - 5-5-0-0 - extraordinary.

so, disappointing, and much to mull over: was it the injuries that cost the 'loc the win? did *youngy* dropping west's mckay when he was on just 30 make the difference as he went on to grab another 28? what if cameron's 30 balls hadn't all been dots? did the 'loc gifting west 12 in wides contribute to the defeat? could even imran's bizarre run out - when a *mex'* thunderbolt clattered off gilchrist's foot onto the stumps - have been the deciding factor? cricket; don't you just luv' it!!

next week the 'loc entertain greenock at home - pleasingly *the dark side* lost too tho'!

the 'loc cruise thru' in the rowan

despite having a *rowan* in their ranks, prestwick couldn't pull off a win in the eponymously-named twenty20 cup on tuesday at shawholm. with the clock ticking past 6.30pm or thereabouts the game still hadn't started and so it was reduced to an 18-overs-a-side affair - the 'loc batting first.

up top were *cheesy* and *mo'saeed* making his debut for '07 for the mighty. and it was as if he'd never been away. a fluent 34 full of *mo'*-type shots gave the 'loc the perfect start. *cheesy*, too, looked in decent nick with one straight maximum going a long way back in the trees. in fact this opening combo' looked like it had potential. all this said - and at my age it's easy to do - both were dropped,.....at least once. as you'd expect in this hair'em/scare'em mode of the game the chances weren't that easy tho', being of the steeper variety. but a good start nonetheless: 52 being put on before *cheesy* had his stumps rearranged by willie rowan.

after *cheesy's* departure the crowd then witnessed a few lil' cameos: *sal'*, *monty* and *atif* all got into the 'teens and, along with the usual bundle of extras, pushed the score past 100 to post 119 for 6. in fact only *bean* (cleaned up for 2 by the impressive craig morrison) and mohsin (cleaned up by stafford) missed out.

119 in 18 overs was a decent total - plus with the late start it was getting dark; and dark at shawholm means fielding by sonar in the second innings! what was needed therefore was tight bowling "early doors" [ed: as they say!] putting pressure on the batters to make mistakes and relieving the pressure on the 'loc fielders as the light faded. so, with this in mind, it wasn't in the script for prestwick to be 27 without loss in the third! yikes. rahid set the tone with 5 wides down leg side ball #1! *bean*, who was skippering the side, brought some order back to proceedings however as he and *monty* reigned back in the prestwick run rate after rahid was hooked after his first two overs cost 23. and with the spinners working nicely in tandem the pressure *did* build and mistakes *did* creep in.

the first wicket went down on 30 and then fell at regular intervals . the key wicket was opener bonner being run out by *mo'saeed* - he'd looked good and had made 22. this was the second run out of the prestwick innings - bonner's opening partner macdonald also having succumbed; run out by *atif*. but this one needs some explanation. standing up [ed: *atif* was 'keeping after *zulf* got stuck in england?!?], *atif* fumbled a nick off *monty's* bowling, then missed a stumping chance as macdonald lurched forward, only to run out said batter after scrambling to his left and throwing down the stumps with his glove still on and aiming at only one of 'em! only at the 'loc. and talk of bizarre run outs brings another incident to mind: macdonald had earlier been stranded mid-wicket when the inbound throw to *monty* behind the stumps was on its way. *monty*, leaning forward, to collect the throw somehow managed to dislodge the bails with his belly tho' before re-arranging the whole thing with the ball. the batter, who'd been stranded halfway and was now halfway to the clubhouse was called back. indeed: only at the 'loc!

in amongst this nonsense there were bits and pieces of good stuff: *shak's* catch to dismiss pettigrew was top quality, and *cheesy* missed a hat-trick by the width of ball seam as he cleaned up the tail. and after tail's demise the visitors' total had made it to 92 - a 'loc win by 27. it's ferguslie or hillhead in round 2.

no-one gets much as the 'loc sneak thru' in low-scoring match

after saturday's monsoons, the 'loc boys were glad to just get some cric' in. with the square having done a passable impression of the commonwealth pool on saturday, it was a remarkably playable deck that welcomed *bean* and kashif arshad as the 'loc batted first in the cockspur cup second round clash with uddingston. the new opening combo' gave the 'loc a decent enough start with 27 being on the board before *kash'* succumbed to hoffman; caught by donnelly for 18. *bean* hung around a bit longer however until, with the score having ticked past 50, he was cleaned up by mckenzie for a useful - and top-scoring - 21. when i say top-scoring it's probably best caveated by saying a few 'loc batters would get close: *spenny* reached 16 before being trapped lbw, *atif* ahmed would get to 17 before becoming *hoffy's* second victim and mohsin ali was left stranded on 18 when rahid amin was run out at the death. and at the end

the 'loc had mustered 151 from their allocation with everyone chipping in something without anyone really going on to dominate. 152 to win then.

but uddy never really got going. rahid bowled nicely up-top nipping out hoffman (caught behind) and amir gul (bowled) to leave the visitors 21 for 2. a stand of 30 followed before scott dalgleish became *bean's* only victim of the afternoon. 51 for 3,.....sorry for 4 as gav' bradley followed dalgleish back to the hutch - another grab behind the sticks by *spen'*; this time off *monty*. then consolidation as 51 for 4 was stabilised: 60 for 4, 70 for 4, 80 for 4; the score mounted. uddy beginning to think they might claw their way back into it. that is until another two wickets fell on the same total. this time the number was 85. 85 for 5 became 85 for 6 as donnelly and johnston were dismissed for 24 and 9 respectively - *monty* grabbing another wicket, matty his first.

from this point on it was carnage: 85 for 6 became 116 all out asatif ahmed ran amok grabbing a "3-for" at the death, including a "c&b" to get rid of niall macleod.

so a comfortable win in the end and another home tie secured: the 'loc now face forfarshire in round 3. stand-out performances were few and far between on the day with the difficult deck conditions. but perhaps rahid's 9-2-21-3 is worthy of mention, as is atif's 7-3-8-3 at the end. *spenny's* three victims should get a mention too, if only to annoy *stubby* who we know reads these pieces!

nichty me, that was close!

fresh (?) from making his sncl debut for the 'loc on saturday, matty coyle, a.k.a. *nichty*, made his scottish cup entrance in sunday's first rounder against aberdeenshire at shawholm. it was a little bit of *deja vu* as far as the deck was concerned with "slow and low" being the order of the day. it fact it might've be more than *deja vu* given it was, in fact, the same deck that had yielded only around 275 runs in nearly 100 overs the day before!

and runs would again proved difficult to come by as, again batting first, the 'loc, at 77 for 4, were in trouble once more. bar *cheesy's* 42 at the top of the order the other three top-four batters hadn't made it to double digits: *bean* had cut one to brand at point, *zulfi'* had spooned one to shaun coetzer after hitting two 4s in the over already and *hampo'* had got an inside edge and a bit of pad on one that trickled back to dislodge a bail. when, oh when, will the 'loc boys make their collective lives easier by building a "normal" innings? talking of "normal" brings us to the 42-run partnership that proved the basis for the 'loc posting their eventual 158 - a "normal" middle order contribution. saleem batting five and *spen'* batting six built their partnership sensibly given the circumstances. and those circumstances? why the absence of anything other than walked singles or boundaries. :-)

the duo's partnership was, however, crucial, and was only broken when *spenny* was bowled by shaun coetzer - 119 for 5. there was then a twenty-run partnership between *monty* and *sal'*; before the former somewhat rashly hooked a full toss from coetzer straight down reid's throat at square leg - reid being one of three dons fielders posted on that particular curve of the boundary!?!

139 for 6 then,.....sorry 7,.....sorry 8 as *nomy* and the *doogler* followed imran back inside like schoolchildren promised sweeties and a look at his bunny rabbits! sigh. *nichty*, tho', managed to put on 15 with *sal'*; and *youngy* 4, before *the mex'* was last out with four balls left - caught at long on. *the big man's* 52 was, however, crucial.

to aberdeenshire's reply: 4 for 1 meant the visitors quickly realised this wasn't going to be a stroll in the park. and 26 for 3 rammed this truth home. shaun coetzer and hays then restored some order before hays became imran's only victim of the afternoon, caught diving forward by *bean* at short'ish mid-off for 16. but coetzer was batting sensibly and, with assistance from a couple of teammates - and *cheesy* who dropped him at mid-off! - he went on to score a patient 29 that very nearly saw his side home.

his innings would eventually come to an end - *the cheese* getting his revenge, snatching a good low catch at mid-on off *nichty's* bowling. which brings us nicely to said *nichtoid's* contribution: 6-0-23-3 are only the bare bones. he came into the attack late on as the skipper looked in vain for a "fifth" bowler able to make a contribution. and what a contribution! bowling a tight line and dragging only a couple short, *matt'* scooped up the wickets of coetzer, mcgillewie and lamb to reinstate the 'loc in the seat labelled "driver's" as the match neared its climax. in fact it might've been a "4-for" had *doogie* not spilled at catch in the deep that could've got rid of number nine smith who went on to score an important 20 in the run chase.

but as it was, the grassing of catches and the batting shortfalls wouldn't cost the 'loc the win with proceedings being wrapped up by umpire john thallon's index finger as last man clubb was adjudged leg-before to *bean*. a win by 15 runs.

the draw for round two takes place on may the 26th, live on *radio scotland* between 9am and 10am in john beattie's show.

it made the ukrainian entry look good!

as avid readers of this column will know, last week's report concluded with the painting of a picture of the next week's events - right now - as being pivotal to the 'loc's season: ayr at home in the sncl followed by aberdeenshire in the scottish cup. well, part 1's done-and-dusted.....and by that i mean the 'loc were done, and the gloves for the resultant dog-fight for league points must now be dusted off.

on a day when it looked like not a lot of cric' might be played, *mossy* must be congratulated on producing a pitch at all when most grounds around the country had "no ball games" sign up. slow-and-low was the order of the day; but the deck proved eminently playable. what to do tho' if you won the toss? answer: duck the issue and lose the toss.....which is exactly what *hamps* decided to do. ayr win the coin flick and the 'loc are batting.

the week previous had seen a nuclear start with mushroom clouds appearing above the heads of five batters before the 'loc had 90 on the board, and inside seventeen overs. it couldn't be worse, could it? eh, yup! try 79 for 5 in the thirty-third over. yes, you read it correctly, the 33rd over. it really was *that* slow, and *that* low. this time the five unlucky victims were *cheesy* (21), *bean* (7), *zulf'* (9), *sal'* (8) and *spenny* (0). that elusive "base" still desserts the 'loc.

and yet things had started well enough - 32 without loss in the twelfth wasn't a disaster as *cheesy* and *bean* took on ayr pro' matty horne and fellow opening bowler, the ageless baird. but then double whammy: *bean* and *cheesy* out in consecutive overs and two new batters at the crease. never a sensible plan, and not, i think, mentioned by *hampo'* pre-match. *bean* had earlier survived an appeal when he gloved one to a sprawling ayr fielder and it had been left to the votes of the umpiring jury to give him a life. but not for long; the *wee man* was removed by a cracking catch in the gully by ayr's overseas amateur hamish rutherford. *cheesy* then dragged one on.

the two new batters were *zulf'i* and garry as noted: *zulf'i* had missed out in edinburgh the week before and it would turn out to be almost an identikit dismissal that cut short his stay this time too. caught behind by the 'keeper. now it was *hampo* and *the mex'*. saleem arrived in the middle in search of his first sncl runs of the campaign, and got these to polite applause with a single off his third ball. a glorious 4 and three more singles later however he was gunned down lbw for the third match running - out for 8. *hampo'* then welcomed *spen'* to the middle but it wouldn't be the latter's day as he became the second victim of the umpire's gun - lbw wilson two overs later, with an entry in the *webbed feet award* table in his back pocket. 79 for 5 as noted.

the five-down position at the grange club had at least resulted in a revival as *monty* and *hampo'* had added 97 for the sixth wicket that week. there'd be no repeat tho' as imran holed out to andy mcelnea

off *bod's* bowling: 90 for 6. horrible. could any of the rest of the tail wag - in fact could it simply hang there whilst the *g'* played some shots? answer: no. *doogie* slashed at a wide one from rutherford and was caught at short third man after a champagne reverse sweep to steal the strike from *hamp's* (!); *nichy* chipped a slower ball from wilson down colin mccrossin's throat at mid-off; and *hampo'* perished at the hands of mcelnea, rutherford's second grab of the innings. this left *maddy* and *youngy* with four overs or so to see out to avoid ayr possibly getting a bonus two points - this they did adding 18 in the process. 137 for 9 in 50 overs - not the sort of fireworks that'll result in turnstiles being erected around the old ground! but smaller totals have defended.....

.....and to do this needs tight bowling and early wickets. so, at 73 for 5 chasing, with mcelnea, rutherford, horne, patterson and renny all settled down in front of the clubhouse tv in time to see the armenian eurovision entry, things were certainly looking up. at the crease were the experienced duo of dougie johnstone and mccrossin tho'. these guys have more successful run chases under the belts than *wogan's* watched *eurovision song contests*. and they would add another one: mccrossin played sensibly in accumulating an unbeaten 35 to see his side thru', whilst johnstone's patient 27 added to renny's earlier 30 gave him great support in the task. it was left to johnstone (dm) to stroke the winning runs after *di* had departed. an ayr win by 4 wickets with four-and-a-bit overs to spare.

so what had started off well, nearly sunk without trace, been revived again to restore hope, eventually petered out into a bad home defeat to a side that was there to be beaten. sigh. and with other results around the place all in, the 'loc found themselves third bottom in the aftermath. it's remarkable that in their three league thus far, they've won one, been "right in it" in one and been in with a chance in the third, *without* yet having posted any kind of score. ayr's middle order showed just what can be achieved with sensible batting, good running and a game plan on even a tricky deck. well played to the cambusdoon guys.

for the 'loc it's back to hard practice again: batting and fielding, and fitness, remain the highest priorities with the bowlers all returning perfectly respectable figures on the day; imran's 3 for 25 being the pick. saleem's appearance as "fifth bowler" was also a plus as he returned figures of 5.4-1-1-2.

next up it's part 2 of the aforementioned "big weekend" - aberdeenshire in the scottish cup.....

oh, and btw: serbia won *eurovision*.

what a shambles!

if this report sounds a little terse - 'pologies but it's the second time it's been written, and it's late. yes, yes, i know, save it as you go along! very good, people! to the game: after winning the toss at a venue where even jimmy dunc's can't remember the 'loc last winning, the skipper decided to bat. sound enough decision: bat first, rack up big score, bowl straight, field like dervishes, win game. straight forward - nothing complicated.....unless of course you're 28 for 2, then 83 for 5! yikes - not anywhere in said plan.

noman had opened with *cheesy* and made a blob, *zulf'*, who was in great nick, did just that, nicked one. and then *sal'* and *bean* went cheaply too, before *cheesy* departed. phew,.....and it was only over #17 what was going on? well whatever it was, it seemed to involve grange's 'keeper smith. three catches and a stumping to be more precise. bar *cheesy* who looked like he was enjoying himself as he raced to 43, the aforementioned others had scraped together just 8, with *the mex'* notching back-to-back blobs after he was gunned down lbw for the second week running.....

a recovery was most definitely needed and, as imran wandered out to join his skipper, it was looking like it would rest on the old man's shoulders. and *immy* wouldn't disappoint. playing his trade mark expansive game, imran notched a 61-ball 52 to support *hampo'* as the two put on 97 for the sixth wicket and drag the 'loc back into contention. what was now needed was for the tail to bat with *g'* to the end - use your allocation being the mantra in such circumstances. but it wsn't to be 180 for 6 became 199 for 9

before *maddy* and *youngy* scraped together another 11 to reach 210. *hampo'* had top-scored with 73 before being adjudged lbw, and *doogie* had run himself out as only he can (i.e. turning blind with the turning circle of a sherman tank!) and zaeem had gone first up, one of smith's five on the day. 210 it was then.

and 210's not always a game-losing score - a couple of quick wickets, some decent bowling and fielding and anything's poss'. 20 for 2 then gave the 'loc hope: maiden out, macrae out. two internationalists gone, and bailey - the grange pro' - and patel in. things now start to go wrong.....

let's just say that bailey played like his reputation - he would effortlessly stroke 127 off just 105 balls to see his side home. never in difficulty, never troubled, never hurried; a chance-less knock. well played *shorty!* patel on the other hand..... it's not often a batter has the brass neck to nick a quick delivery to the 'keeper standing back, who takes it in front of first slip, and then stand there. ooops - sorry - silly me - maiden had done it too! at least macrae had the decency to slink off gracefully having given *zulf'* his second catch. but back to patel: nicked it he had, but stood there he did. and, amidst great consternation and not a little amazement, the ump's let mr patel stay. extraordinary. anyway justice was dished out by the cricketing gods when patel ran himself out next over - a straight drive to *nom'y* was scooped and the bowler's end stumps re-arranged before patel's bat reached safety. "you are the weakest link, goodbye!"

after patel's nonsense the game was restarted with giles holmes having joined george bailey, and it would be holmes that would play the important complementary role to bailey's as the home side strolled to their win - a 45-ball 38 being holmes' contribution before imran nipped him out.

on the bowling front it wasn't pretty: *cheesy* went at 6s, *hampo'* at nearly that, and [even] *bean* went at 5s. only really imran and zaeem can hold their heads up, with zaeem's 7-1-30-0 showing, again, he can contribute at this level. around the bowling the fielding was adjudged "horrible" by the onlooking 'loc travelling support,.....okay *spen'* and *ronnie!* *spen's* innings note-taking suggested afterwards that 30+ runs were fumbled away by poor concentration and lack of technical ability in this important department - hard work beckons at practice next week.

so, the 'loc go 1-1 in the sncl and a six-wicket defeat's on their card. next week it's ayr at home - crucial - and then aberdeenshire in "the scottish" - equally crucial!!

start and finish with *cheese!*

after his two-week [cricketing] honeymoon, the sun finally got to *the cheese* - ball one in the sunshine and it had already gone off. anyone remember wesley dean thomas? well for jan stander, read ali farooq! heriot's fp's skipper stevie knox had won the toss and inserted the 'loc and the *robster* was facing mr farooq's first cherry. now we all know cherries and cheese don't go together, and so it turned out - and when wood and cherry failed to go together either, rob' had been cleaned up ball #1. in fact, in the box, *shorty* just had enough time to finish his opening line to his fellow scorer ("our overseas am' looks really good") before having to draw the day's first two dreaded vertical lines opposite rob's name and a solitary red "w". 0 for 1, new season; same 'loc.

this brought *zulfi'* to the middle to join the mighty's other opener, imran adrees. these two restored some order by taking the score on to 27 before imran was dismissed gloving a bouncer from sheppard-burgess to gav' micintyre. when i say "bouncer" readers please don't picture brett lee, this bouncer was so short and slow it was, in fact, coming down when imran put a hand up to stop it landing on his bonce! nevertheless, 27 for 2 and *the mex'* in at four. but it wouldn't be the big man's day as he was adjudged lbw without troubling *shorty*. now it was 32 for 3.

next in were *hamps* and *bean* - and both did as you'd expect experienced players to do, i.e they hung around and supported the guy who was in. *hampo'* looked in useful nick as he compiled a quick 26

before holing out "c&b" to the visitors' overseas am', mommsen. *beart's* 21 was useful too - he was mommsen's second victim, trying to sweep a straight one. but some sort of base had been created and although the mighty were now six down, the score had edged past 150 and zulfi' was still batting nicely. as ever mr shahid's innings was based on smart shot selection and we had the usual mix of the sublime and the bludgeoned: eight 4s and a 6 in his ultimate 81 was testimony to this. another hugely important knock.....and we won't mention him being dropped at first slip by stevie knox in about over three, and we certainly won't mention said mr knox's fumbling of another regulation catch at mid-on when he was in the 30s. ouch, and, eh, ouch as they say.

then, after zulfi' swung past a straight one, there was the usual scurrying and swinging by the tail and 19 were added for three wickets in three and a half overs. 181 for 9 it was then, and if not a full-scale jail break by the 'loc, the innings was certainly tantamount to missing a court appearance.

but as [both the] regulars to this column know: the 'loc defend 181 - and less - on a disturbingly regular basis. and so it would be again on day one of league campaign 2007. in the end *beart's* "4-for" and *spenny's* heroics behind the woodwork would see the boys home. and yet for a while it looked like those nice edinburgh chaps might take away the win points. at 105 for 2 and stevie knox batting sensibly this was certainly the consensus view. but the third wicket would prove crucial: knox's scalp. the bowler was zaeem and *spen'* was the third party involved. standing up, *spen'* snatched the thinnest of edges from knox to send the visitors' skip' back to the clubhouse; out for a patient 56. now there was a glimmer. 106 for 3 then became 113 for 4 as ayaz gul was sent packing soon afterwards - *beart's* first victim. then it became the *bean* show: two balls/two wickets in his seventh over changed everything - the 'loc faithful starting to believe; the heriot's fp boys starting to analyse their tailenders' chances. in fact 4 in 14 balls would be *beart's* destructive spell, and from there the capital's finest weren't going to come back. only 40 runs were added for the last seven heriot's fp wickets with proceedings coming to an end as they'd begun: cheesman/ball/bails dislodged/batter out - this time, of course, *cheesy* had the ball in hand and it was sheppard-burgess that was trudging back to the changing room after his stumps had been re-arranged. a win for the 'loc, and 2 bonus points "to boot" by having dismissed the oppo' in doing so.

plus points on the day: zulfi's great knock; *beart's* "4-for"; *spen's* two catches, a stumping and run out, and zaeem's sncl debut (5-0-17-1). on the "could do better" front: two of the top five getting blobs, and some sloppy fielding - you know who you are, and that's "you" plural - criminal in a low-scoring game! so work to be done in the week, but pleasing to win all the same - sadly so did the dark side!

'loc record second win in as many days in elm trophy

the eric lane memorial trophy match between the 'loc and uddingston is now very much a pre-season tradition and, historically, the games have proved competitive affairs. sunday's encounter at shawholm was no different with both sides playing a mixture of youth and experience. uddy had new pro' ian moran in their line up along with aussie "overseas amateur" james, their south african transfer from ek, gavin bradley, and 1st xi regulars ricky bawa and amur gul. the 'loc meanwhile had a similar mix of players, with saturday's centurion zulfi' shahid missing along with the unavailable mo' saeed. into saturday's line up came *nichty*, imran adrees and *youngy*.

on a dampish day *the g'* won the toss for the second successive day and again elected to bat. opening this time were *cheesy* and *spen'*. *spenny* however didn't trouble the scorers in the part of the book that counts, whilst *cheesy's* occupancy in the middle was all too brief for the spectators braving the chilly conditions - out for 28 when he was looking like going on. then after *hamps* came and went for 6, it was left to *bean* and saleem to rescue the innings. and this they did looking, from the boundary, like two pieces of a russian dolls set! 53 for 3 was hauled back to 99 for 4 as the two played sensible - and controlled - cricket. *beanie* was the doll to find itself back in the toy cupboard with the score on 99 however, adjudged lbw to *the seagull*. then, after imran came and went for 4, it was saleem and *nichty* coyle who continued on. *nichty* sensibly played a nice support role to *the big mex'* and the two put on 61 for the sixth wicket - saleem going, stumped for 79, in the third last over. this left just enough time for

maddy to score a cameo 24* off just twelve balls to push the 'loc score to 192 for 6 in their allotted 40 overs.

in reply the 'loc bowled all their front-line bowlers with *hampo'*, imran, *bean*, *cheesy*, *arrow*, *maddy* and *doogie* all rolling their arms over with some success. uddy eventually mustered just 150 in their reply with youngster josh johnson top-scoring with a sensibly compiled 32*. well batted josh. around him, at six, he had little support from the middle order and tail however, and after uddy's top order had been dismissed the result was not in doubt. "overseas amateur" james was unlucky in holing out to an *arrow* full toss for 12, *the seagull* made 26, pro' moran 28 and gav' bradley 15. for the 'loc - as noted - all the bowlers grabbed at least one wicket, with *hampo'* being typically economical, and imran's 8-1-16-1 being worthy of note too. in the field *cheesy* held on to two difficult chances - *maddy*, however, didn't! :-)) and - are you reading this *stubby*? - *spenny* snatched his fifth victim of the weekend with a smart catch low down to his right late on.

so a two-game weekend and two competent performances and two wins. next week the real fun starts: both 'loc senior sides find themselves in league action.....

[very] friendly win for the 'loc

new boy robin *cheesy* cheesman got his first [damp and chilly] taste of scottish cric' with a run out - that's a game and not a run out, as in.....och, you know what i mean - in the pre-season friendly against renfrew. the sncl first division side were comfortably disposed of by a young 'loc outfit featuring no less than three players who've come through the club's burgeoning youth set up. throw in *arrow* jodah and *cheesy* to this mix and even *spenny's* aged frame couldn't push the team average age much past 25!

to the game: batting first, new skipper garry hampson sent *cheesy* and *bean* in first. *cheesy* proceeded to smash a lightning fast half century in under 30 balls to have woolly hatted onlookers asking "is he heath pike in disguise?" in fact their only disappointed was that *cheesy* didn't hang around a little longer - you could say it **grated** with some. [groan!] *cheesy's* departure brought last season's top bat, zulfi' shahid, to the middle for his first knock of the season, and the good news is he continued where he left off - a ton! 103 was enough for zulf' who retired for a well-earned mug of hot cocoa! thereafter there was time for a retirement-inducing quick-fire 34 from *hamps*, a *rafay* 23 and a sheriff for veteran spence (4*). making up the component parts of the season's first scorecard was *bean's* 17.

and after shorty had added everything up the grand total of 294 for 3 was what was declared. renfrew had - generously - used nine bowlers with ex-'locster afzal umeed returning the best figures for the visitors: 2 for 30 in his eight overs.

renfrew's reply was a fairly turgid affair with their eventual 166 all out taking all 40 of their allotted overs - sigh. the plus side was *hamps* didn't feel the need to bowl himself and *bean* slotted straight back into the groove marked "line, length and consistency" returning 4 for 16 in six overs. but, perhaps more importantly, *cheesy*, *maddy*, *doogie*, *arrow* and zaeem all turned their arms overs. *cheesy* impressed opening the bowling with *maddy* taking 1 for 18 in his seven overs - were you and wee bruv' watching *maddy*? the question's asked as *maddy* and *the doogler* took a bit of tap going at nearly 7-an-over each. zaeem, on the other hand, was *hampson-esque* in his wicket-taking and economy: 3 for 17 in eight overs being a very nice return first up. see, told you that winter practice would pay off z!

so an easy win in the end - a good run out for the troops, and a few winter cobwebs blown away to boot.