



Henderson the fall-guy as Middlesex unite

Tyrone Henderson had less to be cheerful about when he fell victim to a dressing-room prank.

Even in this crazy consumer-led and materialistic society we live in, the best things in life are the simple things; your friends, cups of coffee, conversations and the odd game of golf. They cost nothing and they are the most meaningful. Let me tell you though, Middlesex's recent victory in the Twenty20 competition was about as meaningful as it gets for us at the home of cricket. Well, it is a funny game isn't it? Not that we haven't heard that one before, but after two drubbings in the County Championship and a bad loss in the Pro40 against Durham it looked like the excitement leading up to Twenty20 finals day might end sooner rather than later.

Well not this time. Middlesex's formula that has been so successful in this year's competition held its own when it really mattered most. So after a great turnaround it has been a fantastic week for Middlesex, there's certainly some great talent in the ranks and the squad is showing real signs of strength and depth.

The drama of the dropped catch, the Dawid Malan overthrows and the anxiety over those final two balls put everyone's adrenalin into overdrive. Anyway we are a week on, and questions of the Champions League and the trip to Antigua for the Stanford tournament are a hot topic and so they should be. Cricket has clearly taken a quite a turn. In the words of the Middlesex coach Toby Radford, "the experience was quite surreal". This quick-fix cricket is bringing about exciting times and while it may not be everyone's cup of tea it is certainly a great time to be playing.

In the aftermath of everything there has been some larking around at the club, which I suppose is to be expected after the stratospheric performance in the Twenty20 finals.

David Nash, known around the circuit for his practical jokes, has been at it again ... and his victim this time? None other than the man of the moment - Big Tyrone (the incredible hulk) Henderson.

Henderson is a loving, home-spun kind of guy. He has to go down as a popular member of the nice-guy eleven but maybe on this occasion I would have to slip him into the naïve eleven too.

Sorry Ty - maybe I should have checked with you before I write these sort of things!

Anyway. We arrived at Lord's for a back-to-work session. Believe it or not there is still some work to be done before the season is over. Some good results in the Pro40 and a strong finish in the Championship is a must.

In a quiet moment, Nashy decides it's time for some fun and to call Tyrone. Good with voices, he becomes a representative of UK sport doping control. He wants to discuss Tyrone's recent drugs test following the Twenty20. Gravely, and keeping a strongly official tone to his voice, Nash told him that he had failed - but that sometimes this happens.

Boringly echoing the voice of officialdom from the car park, Nashy told Tyrone that a 'b' sample is an essential requirement but that he mustn't worry – it's all part of the procedure. He would be calling back to advise him of when and where he'll need to go for his second test.

With most of the boys in on the joke it was hard for us all to focus on practice. Tyrone didn't even bother. We caught the occasional glimpse of his giant frame pacing up and down outside the MCC Indoor School, the bemused shrugging of shoulders, the shaking of the head.

I popped outside to pretend I was looking at the weather and heard him hiss, eyes wide, almost panic stricken into his phone: "But I don't do these things, I'm clean, I'm a clean guy..."

I reported back and everyone was in hysterics.

Then Tyrone came back in, trying to pretend nothing had happened.

Inevitably his phone rang again. It was Nash once more in the guise of the UK Sport official.

Curtly, he told Henderson he would receive a call in the next half-an-hour to discuss the next step.

Tyrone nearly curled up into the foetal position on the spot!

The remainder of the indoor session was punctuated with comments like: "Did you have a 'Night-nurse' you shouldn't have?" And "They're doing Ginseng tea upstairs, Ty, if you fancy one!"

Desperately trying to keep straight faces we waited for the final call.

When it came we all held our breath, straining to hear the conversation.

The big South African seemed to shrink before our eyes. His face took on an ashen pallor.

“What do you mean a lie detector test?” he spluttered. “Of course I’ve never done one!”

And then:

‘What!!! Look mate, I don’t even take Disprin!’

Finally:

“What has Dwain Chambers got to do with it?”

A grown man crying was definitely on the cards.

Nashy gave it away when he came back into the Indoor School. Literally weeping with laughter he set everyone off. Only Tyrone stood there – a bemused, dispirited figure looking questioningly at everyone.

And when he caught on, he responded as only he would. With a generous smile and barrel-chested laugh. “Hey man – you certainly got me with that one.”

When the dust had settled I reflected that though Ty had been the butt of a heck of a joke, it had all been cool.

Great camaraderie, genuine humour, a lot of laughs - that doesn’t cost much does it?