

BERTIE

by Harry Dunn
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Club championships are fun, they say
And there's a chance of fame and glory,
So I signed up, in hope, to play
The Singles, Minor, Men's, the subject of this story.

Referring to the chart I saw that I'd drawn Bertie Bain,
And we agreed to play our first round match,
At five pm on Friday - barring acts of God,
Or storms with heavy rain.

Come Friday night at five p.m.
And there's a problem with the weather;
I said to Bert, "A storm's blown up.
It's raining cats and dogs out there, and blowing hell for leather;
I think we should postpone our game,
Until the climate's better"

But Bertie disagreed,
"A few harmless drops of rain", he said,
"Might change our line and speed,
But this is perfect bowling weather
And we both of us must bowl in it,
As we're in this game together".
And of course I didn't want to be
The man who showed the old white feather.

The fact that I wear glasses, and see nothing in the rain
Was hardly worth a mention,
So I agreed to play - regardless of the pain,
That Minor Singles first round match
With that hardy Bowler, All-weather Bertie Bain.

So out we went in fading light,
To play our scheduled match,
My clothes felt rather wet and tight,
And I'd a cap stuck on my thatch.

That wily Bert wore shorts, but in longs I was attired
Soaking wet and somewhat heavy in that slop,
So I donned a plastic raincoat, which I'd recently acquired
From the local Two-Bob Shop.

And at the other end stood gallant marker, Brian Growse
With score-card, pen and chalk,
A credit to the house,
Making silent gestures, but very little talk,
He was quiet as a mouse.

The game progressed in silence,
And our scores he duly wrote
On the soggy bowling score-card,
In a pocket of his coat.

The wind increased - from unpredictable and gusting
To something near gale-force,
I thought conditions on that green - already quite disgusting
Couldn't get much worse.

Then Brian lost the vital score-card
While chasing his sun - hat:
It blew away in the gale-force wind
So naturally I thought - that surely must be that!

"Not at all", said Bert, whom I could hear but hardly see,
Such was the range of my restricted forward vision,
"A few drops of rain and a gentle breeze have never troubled me"
And he lamented my sad lack of pluck
With a calm but firm derision.

So Brian found another card, and, hatless, soldiered on
'Tho ankle-deep in mud
And Bert and I kept bowling
In Noah's second flood.

Our bowls trailed plumes of water, like vapour-trails behind
But of course I couldn't see them clearly,
As I was bowling almost blind,
And waiting 'til we reached the other end
To count whatever we could find.

My cheap and cheerful rain-coat, from the local two-bob shop
Was entirely rent asunder, in a fiendish blast of wind
Which caught me on the hop.
I tore it off - it had to go - and tossed it in the bin,
I was soaking wet from head to toe

And it just held the water in.
That crafty bowler, Bertram Bain
Said how lucky we both were, to be playing in this way,
"Thank God the cool change has arrived", said Bert.
It was far too hot to bowl, he said, earlier that day.

Up at the other end, Brian's second card was sodden,
And he'd lost his scoring pencil,
In deep mud, in which he'd trodden
He said "I'm switching to the pennant board
To complete this bit of biz,
From now on, Bert is 'Inverloch',
So Harry must be 'Vis' ."

There was never any doubt - and I knew I bowled in vain,
As to who would win this round,
In the Singles, Minor, Men's,
Played in pouring rain;
It finished twenty-one to twelve,
In favour of the greatest wet-track player
The world has ever seen :
I speak of Web-foot Bertie Bain,
The bowling giant-slayer -
With just a touch of mean!