

ENGLAND BOCCIA SQUAD

Friendly International in Vienna 8th and 9th November 2008

Athletes:

BC1/BC2 Team Ali Lalani, Andrew Morgan, Jaco Roux and Paige Tabone

BC3 Pairs Jess Hunter and Ryan Paladino

Staff: Daleen Roux, Lisa Clements, Sharon Page, Steve Morgan,
Martin Paladino and Lee Hunter

Coach: Barry Bowden

Manager/Referee Cassandra Turk

What a truly exciting weekend of competition lay ahead of the athletes when we arrived at the new Terminal 5, Heathrow early Friday morning. The boarding of our flight went extremely well, in fact unbelievably so. Once settled and take off commenced, we were treated to the usual light refreshments and the questions of who and what we played from passengers and cabin crew. Our arrival in Vienna was punctual, alas too punctual. Our chairs arrived by catering lift and we were in the arrival lounge all too soon, hence no transport. After a telephone call to Micheal Geiling, the Austrian Organising Committee, our buses appeared. After loading our respective vehicles we headed off to our destination. Unfortunately, someone forgot to give the drivers maps as to where the school was located, so for a good 40 minutes we were driven around the provinces, down narrow streets, reversing into side streets, crossing over roundabouts till we eventually arrived at the designated location. Our rooms keys were thrust into our hands and we each went our seperate ways to our rooms, of which we had 5. The rooms were very comfortable, 3 to 4 beds and good ensuite facilities. We had arranged to meet in the dining hall, in order that we could give out the order of play to the athletes with various instructions for the weekend. An edible meal was enjoyed by all and all too soon people were leaving to take to their beds. A Team Manager's meeting followed the meal and it was good to catch up with friends made through Boccia and share forthcoming events scheduled to take place in 2009 and 2010.

Saturday, every-one was down having breakfast at the appointed time. Warm-up was booked for 8 am and both Team and Pairs were on court throwing balls and discussing various tactical play. The Team had 3 games on their schedule and the Pairs also had 3.

BC1/BC2 Team	England - Germany	5 - 0
	England - Hungary	10 - 2
	England - Austria	6 - 2
BC3 Pairs	England - Austria	1 - 5
	England - Denmark	1 - 8
	England - Croatia	0 - 13

Excellent results from the Team, which meant one more game to play in their pool and the Gold would be theirs.

The Pairs fought hard in each game, the scores did not reflect the standard of play from both athletes.

The end of the day's play finished at 7.30pm, the athletes albeit exhausted, were motivated by their respective successes. The evening was spent amongst the visiting countries, making friends and renewing acquaintances, whilst enjoying a leisurely meal. The team meeting was positive and spirits were indeed high.

Sunday's schedule was short and the closing ceremony was ear-marked for 2.30pm as many teams had to leave for the airport.

BC1/BC2 Team England – Netherlands 5 - 6

BC3 Pairs England - Hungary 6 - 5 playing to tie break. This match was for 7th/8th place.

Even though England won all their matches except one, the final result was Austria won Gold, England finished with silver, Holland the bronze. Although extremely disappointed, the Team donned their silver with immense pride.

It was then time to bid farewell to our hosts and head off back to the airport. We boarded the buses and sat back both mentally and physically exhausted. However our return journey was not without drama. We were driven to the Arrivals instead of the Departure entrance, so after an exchange of brief words and signs, we reversed onto the road and a frantic detour to the right building was made. The building came into view, but to get to it meant a 10 minute journey around the perimeter. The driver proceeded to drive his vehicle over 3 lanes of traffic, through the central reservation that was straddled with metal bollards and along the opposite side of the carriageway. Unbelievable, thankfully we all survived to tell the tale. The driver tried to apologise but we chose to ignore him.

The flight home was not without mishap. The winds were at their peak on reaching Heathrow, which meant we were unable to land. After circling and battling the strong gale force winds and experiencing the buffeting of the plane, we landed at Terminal 5 an hour late. Worse was to come. No wheelchairs, they had been crated in Vienna and taken off board in London and put onto the carousel in baggage reclaim. After lengthy discussions, numerous phone calls, representatives from BA and BAA doing their bit to pacify the now very irate Team Manager, Coach and support staff. The athletes remained on board for well over an hour until their chairs had been retrieved from baggage reclaim and brought to the correct jetty for transfer. It was totally unnecessary and certainly does not bode well for 2012. We parted company after our exit through Customs and we all agreed it was a really excellent weekend. The entire Squad supported each other through the high and lows and humour featured highly on the agenda too. A really successful and rewarding competition for many of those athletes who were new to International play. Well Done to each and every one of you.

Cassandra
Team Manager