

Vienna International Boccia Event
8th/9th September 2007

10 athletes and 13 staff travelled to Vienna in early September to compete in this Austrian team and Pairs event, against sides from Holland, Canada, Ontario, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Denmark and of course, Austria!

In order to give a variety of 'new' and existing athletes an opportunity to participate we decided to enter one BC1/BC2 team and two BC3 pairs this time. The most successful of those turned out to be Cecilia Turk, Liam Beresford and Craig Johnson, who claimed the Silver medal, winning all but their last match. The team of Daniel Bentley, Zoe Robinson, Sean Francis and Matthew James came 5th in their class, whilst Rachel Morgan, Therese Hunt and Emma Harris were 6th in the BC3 Pairs competition.

Cass offered her services as a Referee, and this was a great way to get our Team Manager to the event, as well as taking myself as Coach. She did an excellent job and gained valuable experience, both as referee and 'fashion icon'; I gather her 'golden shoes' are still being talked about in some circles!

Our second BC3 Pair, captained by Rachel Morgan, played three games in their round robin, only losing on a tie-break to two very capable Canadians, who went on to win the whole event. Their other match scores were a 3-5 loss against Denmark and 0-7 against a young but very promising 'Austria 2'. They went in to a three-way play-off for 5th-7th places, losing 6-8 to the Czech Republic and beating Denmark on the tie-break to claim 6th place over-all.

The throwers team had a tough draw, with both the eventual winners and runners-up in their group of four. They beat Holland 10-4, Austria 5-4, but lost to Ontario 2-6. As Holland beat Ontario it went to points difference and then points for, with Holland and Ontario just squeezing through ahead of us. This was very disappointing, especially as we easily won our 5th/6th play-off game, beating Slovenia 11-1. Meanwhile Ontario beat Slovakia 10-5 and Holland beat Canada 7-6, before going in to the final, which Holland won on the tie-break. Therefore we were the only team to beat the eventual winners! Matthew James played very well, and as the only BC1 we had taken with us, needed to stay on court all the time. Dan, Sean and Zoe shared the rest of the play, with Dan further developing his captaincy skills and everyone playing their part in placing scoring balls.

Our first BC3 Pair was captained by Ce Turk, and all three players contributed well to their excellent winning streak. In the round robin they beat the Czech Republic 3-2 and then easily overtook Austria 1 with a 9-1 score line. In the semi-finals they took on Austria 2 and beat them 7-1. These Austrian players are young but look very good, however, our more experienced players put them under pressure from the start, upsetting their confidence and leading to a good victory. The final against Canada was lost 1-5, and this was in fact a very fair result. The Canadians were better on the long ends, and used that to their advantage. This is something that we must keep working on in training, because it is the way that the top international nations continue to win.

There were a number of new staff as well as players on this trip, and thanks must go to everyone who pulled their weight; each staff member having a role to fulfil and therefore hopefully knowing that they were a key part of the whole England Squad. This is part of our strength and we must continue to work at it.

Sandra King

