

BOYS 2 MEN

England Cadet Boys took first place at the Sparkassen Rondo Cup in Austria (31st Jan-4th Feb) with a squad of both experienced programme players (who made the semi-finals of this competition in '07) and newcomers. If the phrase Boys to Men meant anything, this was their moment and the Cadets share their story...

THURSDAY 31ST JANUARY

"After hours of journeying to Stansted Airport, we were greeted by the cheerful and enthusiastic Carol Gordon (Coach). A few of us were tired by the half day spent in school or the journey so a quick drink and a sleep in the café was in order. The squad was reunited after a month and a half apart and as we received our England Kit bag from Manager Tony Brewer, a sense of pride rushed through our bodies. After the security search we set out to find a healthy meal amongst the vast catalogue of fast food restaurants. We proceeded through the terminal with a sense of excitement....we were finally on our way together as one!"
by Will Jenkins and Luke French

"The hotel we stayed in was called the 'Montfort' and was well situated only a short walk from both sports halls. Each room had its own unique view of the forest and snowy mountains and were spacious. The hotel gave us a good, focused atmosphere, we ate our meals in the restaurant in a specially sectioned off room giving us more time to bond." by Dan Riddle and Roman Neveykin



John Chapman awarded 'Best Hitter' of the tournament

FRIDAY 1ST FEBRUARY

"After a satisfying breakfast of cereals and toast we had a long training session and were soon hungry so went into the town in search of a restaurant. We stumbled across a delightful pizzeria and despite low expectations were amazed by the service and exquisite food. We left stomach full and frowns turned upside down!! For dinner we had a three course meal which comprised of soup, chicken with vegetables and fruit salad and ice cream." By Dan Warner and Jack Watson

"We were originally only scheduled one training session but had an extra one on Friday morning, giving us time to acclimatise to each other and the hall. After traveling, we were all looking forward to touching a ball again. The gym was a short ride away and after an achy warm up, we started a few drills. The evening session was in the main competitive 'sportshalle'. Now we really had got the journey out of our legs and we were coming together as one strong unit....would it stay like this for the tournament ahead??" By Carl Butcher and James Price

SATURDAY 2ND FEBRUARY

"We had been given the luxury of a lie in and the same breakfast buffet welcomed us as we came downstairs. Not many of us deviated from our choices the previous day. Lunch however was cut short because of some tight match scheduling however, to make up for this we had a hamburger after we won the game. Dinner was average in comparison to yesterday's pizzeria experience. Overall the food was a worthy 7/10"
By Dan Warner and Jack Watson

"The first pool match was against SAR Lichstenstein. We got off to shaky start and went down 19-24 but with some strong serving from Andy Saward and good scrapping from the whole team we managed to pull the deficit back and took the set 28-26. We lost the momentum in the second set but continued to trade points just losing out 20-25. In the 3rd set it was a side out game until the change of ends when good distribution from setter Aaron and good hitting all round allowed us to take the set 15-11. This was a good start for the team and helped us get rid of any nerves in preparation for the tough game ahead." By Andy Saward and John Chapman

"Wurtemberg (last year's winners). We lost the first set 20-25 due to a few errors and consistent hitting from the German team. In the 2nd set we raised our game and started with some excellent service reception by libero James Price and the set ended 25-21 to England. In the 3rd set the team pulled together some excellent defensive transition which gave us a lead of 13-11 but our ill disciplined attack allowed the Germans to win 13-15. Our third game of the day saw the squad go from strength to strength taking on an inexperienced team from Italy Liceo Medina" By Aaron Robertson and Chris Martin

SUNDAY

"The semi final was against our old friend Modena. We knew their game but could we stop them? The game plan was perfectly executed...Dan Riddle sealed the block on more than one occasion, Jack Watson was the rock of passing and defending that any team would aspire to. We were being pushed to the limit but the squad including our brave substitutes did not abandon the fight. The victory was well and truly deserved.....the team has reached a new height." By Coach Carol Gordon

THE DAY OF DREAMS THE FINAL

"It was a beautiful day, the sun was glistening in the cloud ridden sky. A joyous occasion was about to occur. Tension began to flare as the last ball of the ladies final was hit BANG! It was now our time, England's time.

The warm up seemed to take forever as we were peppered into the abyss of fear! The hitting warm up showcased our talent and struck fear in to the hearts of our opposition Wurtemberg. The coin toss came around and we won.... was this a sign of things to come?? Each of the teams went into their huddle2, 3 England!! The game began.

Early in the first set England dominated as Aaron Robertson pounded serve after serve at the opposing passing unit. With Jack Watson and Will Jenkins hitting superbly we found ourselves 7-0 up. After a nervy few points and a feared comeback by Wurtemberg, England maintained their lead throughout the set. England's hitting and blocking was in top form thanks to John Chapman, Andy Saward and Dan Riddle. This was only possible thanks to Libero James Price. We took the first set in a convincing fashion 25-14. The second set began, expectations were high, confidence even higher!! However, the confidence was misplaced as we traded points with Wurtemberg. Then the class of this England Squad shone through as we took a 24-20 lead thanks to strong and tactical serving from John Chapman and Roman Neveykin not to mention a brief yet epic appearance from Dan Warner!! We took this set and the game 25-22.

The Squad went mental as we celebrated together, the closeness of this squad became apparent. The award ceremony was sensational as we received our trophy. Then there were also special awards for Aaron Robertson as best setter and John Chapman as Best Hitter. Overall this tournament produced some highs and lows but we would give it 8 out of 10!"
By Daniel Warner, James Price and Jack Watson

We would like to thank all boys who have trained with the cadets and wish them future success in all that they do. Remember LIFE IS FOR LIVING!!

I would also like to express my personal thanks to Tony and Kath Brewer the perfect team in so many ways...managing the squad as they do we can only get better!! Thanks also to the many coaches who have contributed to the squad and helped these young athletes grow...
Dave Dean, Darren Lewis, Liam Chinnery, Naz Sutton.

Now all that's left to say is.....when do we get to start again?

Carol Gordon



Left: Aaron Robertson awarded 'Best Setter' of the tournament. Right: The team celebrate winning their trophy

RESULTS

England Cadets 2-1 SAR Lichstenstein (28-26, 20-25, 15-11)
England Cadets 1-2 Wurtemberg (20-25, 25-21, 13-15)
England Cadets 2-0 Liceo Medina (25-7, 25-11)

SEMI FINALS

England Cadets 2-1 Modena (22-25, 25-21, 15-6)

FINAL

England Cadets 2-0 Wurtemberg (25-15, 25-20)