

## GILLINGHAM HOCKEY TOUR 2009 TO DUBLIN

Gillingham Hockey Club tour of Dublin 2009 was started with an early morning meet on Good Friday at the Astro with everybody being early except the “sprinkler” but then again he did have a big bag!

The roads were quiet at 5am and good progress was made and we got to Frankley Services at about 7.45 where “hot bum” was met but the side were disappointed as the famous leather jacket was not being worn, but there was another surprise but more of that later.

Back onto the M5 and then the M6 and things were going well and the ferry going from Holyhead was within reach within time, that was until “milky’s” satnav decided to throw a wobbly. The signs for the very port was found easily, the pity was it was the wrong one!! Not only the wrong one but 60miles past the turning to the right one. Some choice words were heard but at the end of the day “milky” took it like a man and paid up when the Port of Holyhead was eventually reached.

The only problem though was the ferry had left some two hours earlier, but not all was lost, there was another at 21.30 and the time was only 15.00 so some time to waste. People were hungry so it was decided to go into Holyhead and start the tour proper, a pub was found and drinking began.

By the time 21.30 came somebody was not very well and had to use a cardboard box to catch the surplus in, this was alright but leaked!

The ferry was boarded and seats found, more beer was consumed, some went to sleep, the time was getting on, estimated ETA at the Hostel was 3.00am, that’s 22 hours after Gillingham had been left.

Once the crossing had been made which went quite quick we were on the Green Isle and the smell of Guinness was wafting across the city but there was no time to think about finding a pub, to bed was the order of the day.

Saturday morning was bright and sunny and not as forecast which was horrible so after a continental breakfast a walk was on the cards before meeting for the first game. Dublin is a big place and not much of it was explored, there were some sore heads as well which did not help.

Saturday morning was also where the “hotbum” surprise came to light, he had brought with him a nice white towelling bathrobe and slippers!!

The meet time was 12.00 for the 13.30 match against Monkstown 2<sup>nd</sup> XI who had won there league and were on a bit of a roll, they were also reinforced with the inclusion of the Irish U18 captain!!

The game got off to a good start following a couple of scares and “tremo” scored, this did spur the opposition into action and they started moving the ball all over the park, being stretched would be putting the action of the Gillingham defence lightly. There were more goals, “bubba” got Gills second but the final score was a 8-2 defeat. Man of the match went to “trunks” for just being awesome in the tackle, dick of the day went to “sprinkler” for still not feeling well, but did look good in the Burberry cap.

Squad for this game was: jonesy, milky, trunks, karrott, bubba, nobby, relix, hotbum, poohsick, burgundy, tremo and wigham with the sprinkler keeping his head down.

We stayed in a pub for a while to make a change, some beers were drunk, the button was used a couple of times, we then headed back to the Hostel for wash and brush up before the evening meal.

The group split but some went to an Indian, couple of cobra, a ruby murry and then off to the Brazen Head, a pub very close to the hostel. The drinking here was paced and nobody got too silly although “nobby” decided he had to relieve himself and blocked the toilet!! Not a pretty site.

Not sure what happened for the rest of the evening as I needed some sleep.

Easter Sunday, weather still bright and sunny, where was the rain that was forecast. Today’s ventures were going to watch England Ladies play Ireland ladies at University College Dublin before we went to play YMCA at 14.00 but before that “milky” handed out the compulsory cream egg, there were also extras from “kards” left in the mini bus.

A short minibus trip to UCD, fantastic facilities with a water based astro, this is Irelands National Hockey Centre which is undergoing work but there were stands in the sun so all was good. They warmed up for 45 minutes, running, shooting etc, some good looking ladies and some with fantastic skills, might be quite good on the hockey pitch as well!!

The game was an eye opener, the passing and movement off the ball was good to watch, even better was that the England Ladies won 3-1.

We then got back on the bus, slightly early so we stopped in a garage to get some food, quick walk by the canal and then off to our game.

The opposition were there already, lucky for us we had a full side with “sprinkler” now drinking beer again, but in the 2 minute warmup a “broken” nose to “jonesy” cast a slight dark shadow over the team, but as goalies are he was back up and running again even with a blood moustache.

It was soon apparent that this was a good side as well, some skills shown had “wigham” confused and if it wasn’t for “sprinkler” who was making up for missing the first game being on top form the first half could have seen the game beyond the Gillingham side but at 0-0 heads were almost still up.

The second half saw the oppo step up a gear, the stand in keeper who was a centre forward was now on the pitch and he was good, even the youngsters were showing subtle touches, the first goal went in, then the second, there were a couple of chances for “tremo”, found with perfect ariels from “burgundy” but no goals. “sprinkler” then made a school boy error, shouting “my ball” but then missing his kick.

The final score was a 5-1 defeat with “jonesy” getting the final goal with the last hit of the game after being put through by the centre back; from there side, superb pass and well finished sending the keeper the wrong way.

Squad for this game was: sprinkler, jonesy, trunks, karrott, bubba, nobby, relix, hotbum, poohsick, burgundy, tremor and wigham. Milky was relegated to the umpires bench along with kards as the HOME side could not produce one, poor show. Man of the match and dick of the day went to “sprinkler” so donning the Burberry cap for another night.

After the game the local public house was found, a biased crowd were watching Leinster beat Harlequins and the barman was unhappy about the drinking games even though we were making less noise than the locals.

A couple of cheeky sherberts led to a couple more together with the button passing around the table, some jibbed out, some took it like a man!!

The return trip to the Hostel was quiet, maybe preparing themselves for the night ahead; this was going to be a trip to Fitzsimmons in Temple Bars area of Dublin, drinking capital of the world.

Some food was consumed, Irish stew contains LAMB, and a couple more beers were drunk. The night ended, well apart from "relix" who thought he had pulled only to find out she was a lesbian!! Just his good luck otherwise he might have had to do something. In the end as we were getting up at 5.00am the dirty stop out was getting in, looking a bit worse for wear but it could have been worse.

Quick trip to the port for a 8.20 ferry, slow journey through the whole of Wales, "nobby" thought it would be nice to see some scenery and spent the whole three hours asleep, we had not even reached Birmingham at it was lunch time, we did stop for a water break, we then stopped at Birmingham New Street station for "wigham" and his biatch "hotbum" to catch a train, and eventually got back to Gillingham at about 20.15, another long day but all back safe and sound if not a little weary.

Thanks to "kards" for driving the 700 miles which allowed everybody to drink, thanks to everybody who played and gave there best, thanks for "him who shall not be named" for organizing another successful tour, bring on Barcelona 2010!!!