

Prelude – The Long Shadow of the Past

The Lions 2013, The Ashes 2010/11 and the Saddos 2016, what have they all in common? All successful touring sides that's what.

They said it would never happen, that organising a Saddo's Tour was like playing a friendly against Fishers, or an economical bowling spell from Curtis, aspirational, but not likely to happen in my lifetime. Well history was on the naysayers' side. The legendary one man tour of Suffolk (got as far as Ware) of 2010 cast a large shadow on any fool looking to inspire such venture, but this is a new era in Saddo's history. Pete called in favours from an old friend, and we had an opposition. Jonno used Google and found us a great hotel in the cultural heartlands of Hampshire. However, hotels in Winchester are astronomical so we went for Andover instead (more of that later).

The Touring party had many things in common with the famous England XI Rebel Tour of South Africa of 1989/1990. A motley collection of old has been's, never will be's and children. The selection process was simple, are you on holiday that weekend? No, you're in.

Chapter 1 – Four is Company

The advanced touring party of Busted, the Saffa, Winfield the Elder and the Corporal made it down to Andover in good time. Feeling cultural they decided to wander around town to seek out its delights. In less time than it takes Curtis to bat all season (15 mins in this case) they had "done" Andover and found a pub. There was talk of having a couple and then heading to the local cricket club for some nets (what with it being only 5pm and we really couldn't drink all night – © T Winfield). Well you cannot make such a rash challenge and not expect a reaction. Suffice to say that we did not find the nets. We did acquire some local knowledge and off to the local Greek for barbecue food we went. 7 bottles of red later we were joined by Sherpa, Points and Captain Yip and it was decided we needed some pre-match exercise.

Chapter 2 – At the Sign of the Dancing Pony

5 rounds later you will find 7 elderly gentlemen dancing at the front of the stage to a rather good covers band. A harsh critic would suggest that some of the team left their best performances of the weekend on that dance floor.



The Backstreet Boys reunion – how it might have looked

Chapter 3 – In the House of Dominos

With the time approaching 1am it was decided to head back to the hotel as an early night is key to any successful performance. Winfield the Elder heads to bed. The children head to Domino's Pizza opposite the hotel because it opens until 3am. As usual 5 say they are not hungry so Busted orders 2 large pizzas which are then consumed by all 6 in the bar of the hotel.



Busted with his “Game Face” on in Domino’s meets his “new best mate ever”

Now I say bar, the lights were turned off and we were told by the landlord earlier not to cross an imaginary line in the bar otherwise we would set off alarms. Well you cannot make such a rash challenge and not expect a reaction. However, in this case, once we woke Busted, who had fallen asleep in his pizza, the challenge of walking up stairs was more than enough and no-one fancied dealing with an irate Winfield woken from his beauty sleep. So all tucked up in bed by 2.45am.

Next morning (9.30ish) the Sherpa and Corporal were woken by Peel, feeling lonely as his roommate Winfield had been up and dressed and out for his morning stroll by 8am.

Chapter 4 - A shortcut to Mushrooms (and cakes)

Breakfast was a health 7 full Englishs with extra toast. Busted arrived last looking like [unwell](#), his eyes sunken further down than a White Star vessel on its maiden voyage, but in this case, with the loss of just the 1 life.



Busted (pre sausage and eggs) in the morning

Cakes, we need cakes. Apparently in this part of the world, any guest looking to make a good impression on a host must arrive with a nice cake. 7 hungover men in Waitrose at 11am on a Sunday is a sight to behold. Putting together a cake whip, a sign of how far over that hill we have travelled. 22 players so let's get 8 cakes says the Sherpa, cos everyone really wants nearly half a cake between innings.

Chapter 5 - Flight to the Plough

Professional teams get to the ground nice and early for a warm up and to inspect the wicket. The Corporal and Pointer arrive in a small country village in an open top car with Electric Six's Gay Bar blaring all over the pub carpark. We like to announce our arrival.

Chapter 6 – Many Meetings

The ground is beautiful. Set in a bowl with the North Wessex Downs on one side it really is the place to be on a beautiful sunny Sunday afternoon. The opposition are friendly and Captain Yip wins the toss. "I think we will have a bat" he confidently announces to shocked faces. It could all be over in an hour some wag shouts. Peel offers to open and looks for a volunteer. The Corporal fails to take one step backwards and is opening with him.

Chapter 7 – The Game goes South

Their team is a mixture of age and experience. Even their one child has a Marlborough Public school cricket shirt on. Their opening bowler is pacey, but Peel get a 2. Their other bowler is younger and quicker. Jones leaves the first as it is wide of the stumps. The Corporal's thought process for the second ball goes a little like this: oh that looks straight, must get forward, oh that is quick, not bouncing, oh s**t. Yoked by a fantastic ball. Peel later calls it a real toe cruncher. Long walk back for the Corporal. Little sympathy from the team, but a noticeable look of fear. Out walks the Welsh Wizard "Can't Run the Grey". He swings and misses a few he would later call them leaves. He hits a nice 4 but two overs later the young fast bowler is back and this time he has Peel in his sights. The ball hits the bat, then the pads, then middle stump. 6 for 2 and the Captain is back in the hutch. Well I say hutch, he is in fact sitting on a table on his own sulking for 10 minutes, I assume giving himself a good talking to. Sherpa joins The Grey in swinging and missing the quick but connecting with anything bowled from the other end. By the end of the 10th over we are on 28 for 2 and looking down a barrel marked 100 would be respectable, right?



Graham – Having a word with himself

Chapter 8 – A journey in the Dark (but then the light)

They say it is at its darkest just before the dawn. Well I have never met a Dawn but in this case it was. Through sheer determination, a bit of luck, and let's be honest, skill, we reach the drinks break at 17 overs on 78. Gandalf eventually falls for 34 bowled. Knee arrives, then departs for 0, his head clearly not communicating with his body as he gloves to the keeper. Next in is Winfield. Church reaches his 50 with a 4 and retires on 53. Saffa arrives and departs for 0, clean bowled but we do not panic. Tim takes control and marshals the tail. Hook Junior arrives at number 8 and make 3, but he gives Tim the strike as often as he can. Pointer in next. He becomes the 4th highest scoring batsman by making 5 before they work out that if you bowl straight ...etc. WG and Hook the father do their bit of letting Tim hit runs. Eventually both fall and the Sherpa returns. He finishes 66 not out and Tim 25 not out. The perform magnificently and we make a club record 176 for 9. Sherpa also sets record for individual runs.

Chapter 9 – The Council of Cake

The tea interval is welcome. In addition to our 8 cakes, they have 2 of their own. Death by cake.

Avoiding the Matt Bond patented team talk of "you got us into this s**t, you can get us out of it" Peel goes for, let's win. Junior Hook states that we will lose in 10 overs. The ICC are investing strange bookmaking activity due to heavy betting on this outcome.

Chapter 10 – The Mirror of Truth

Anyone who knew anything about the tourist XI could tell you one thing was clear. This was always going to be a far better bowling team than it was a batting team. In truth, we won this by 66 runs and Williams and Church were not even required to bowl. In reality neither could actually walk by this stage. The early damage was done by Winfield being quick and economical, 5 -0-15 and WG, 4 – 2 – 12. Young Hook took a blinder of a catch at point off the old man and WG then turned a beauty to remove a real danger man. On to bowl the "losing" 10th over came Mr Optimistic, Junior Hook. As the opposition then required about 140 at that point the odds of defeat in that one over were quite small. As it was he was fast and constantly beating the batsman. His figures were 5-0-20. At the other end was the Corporal, bring the average age of the attack up to a respectable 30. His first wicket can best be described as a rank long hop smashed down Peel's throat. Unlike 5 other fields this year however Peel actually caught the ball and the Corporal was awarded half a wicket (full one as far as stats are concerned). Pointer decided that with the Corporal's fiery bowling a helmet was required so he could stand up to the wickets. A few balls later Pointer whips the bails off and the opener is stumped. Corporal ends with 5-1.5 (let's call it 2) -25. Hook senior is a revelation. His first 3 overs go for 5 and he takes a wicket. He is withdrawn to prolong the game. Saffa bowls 3 overs for 3 (2 maidens) and is also withdrawn early. Knee, finally sober, bowls his usual around the wicket jobs and takes 2 for 10 in three overs.

Chapter 11 – Farwell to Economy

If you want to avoid a one sider affair you need look no further than the bowling of our beloved Captain. 16 off his first 8 balls allows Shalbourne to break the 100 mark. He then unsporting bowls out their last man to bring about total victory.

Chapter 12 – The breaking of the Fellowship

Back to the Plough with the opposition for a thank you pint and a farewell to arms conversation with fellow tourist. Shalbourne were great hosts and it would be fantastic to do this again next year. All agree that touring is to be recommended, with even talk of a Saturday game also.

The End