

TUESDAY 1ST APRIL – Fool to the Dave Smith, by That Correspondent

After a late, though really quite sober, night at the Lettie Fouche reception, the team were rather groggy through lack of sleep at the breakfast table. Bluto of course was on his typically sharp form, having been up since 04:00, much to Marcus's despair as he again lost a good hour or so of sleep to the Yorkshireman. We hit the range in good time and That Correspondent soon returned the team's union flag to outside the SABU offices, it having been removed for security reasons (when asked if the flag might be 'liberated' overnight, one team member did comment "well I would"). Running up the flag provided an excuse for the rest of the team to check the results board. Despite the results usually being posted in the same fashion as London bus arrivals we were able to pick up the following news of our performances;

The Dewar – Saturday afternoon, 2+7 at 3, 5 and 600m.

- 1- BCRC Blue – Coach: Ensor; Firers: Messer, Jeens, O'Leary (100.14), Sykes, Watson, Thomas. Total - 598.76 (record score)
- 2- BCRC Red – Coach: Charlton; Firers: Patel, Davison (100.12), Gilpin, Dyson, Shouler (100.12), Underwood. Total - 598.69 (also a record score, for a few minutes)
- 3- BCRC White – Coach: Townsend; Firers: Ball, Compton, Lewis (100.13), Alexander, McCullough, Raincock. Total- 595.71 (equal to the old record score)
- 4- Wwatersrand A – Total- 588.53

The Hamilton – Monday afternoon, 2+7 at 3, 5 and 600m

- 1- BCRC Red – 625.69 – Coach: Charlton; Firers: Messer (105.13), Jeens, McCullough, Alexander, O'Leary, Raincock
- 2- BCRC Blue – 624.71 (Compton 105.16)
- 4- BCRC White – 620.70 (Gilpin 105.12)

Also now listed on the boards were the results for the Orange Free State Cup (from Monday) which was top scored on 105.14 by W du Ploy, James Lewis and Richard Shouler. It was not clear from the boards if a tie would be shot. The Scottish Sword was won by JG du Toit on 100.11 followed by James Lewis 100.7, and Patel 99.14 (sadly carrying a 49.9).

Once everyone had finished laughing at Jumbo having been listed as an Under 19, we got off to the ranges and soon the first detailers were advanced forward for the first detail ready for the morning prayers. A certain cheeky team member (with input from others) had had the presence of mind the previous day to devise a prank on the captain appropriate to the date. To this effect, just as General Alexander was

about to lead the range in prayers, he announced "Could the GB team captain Steven Thomas please come to see me?" General "Mac" being quite a figure on the range, Steve was soon at the control vehicle and the following conversation was picked up over the tannoy:

Steven – "Good morning General. How are you?"

Mac – "Well, so-so Steven. I had a lovely evening at the Great Britain team reception last night but I'm afraid some of the food may have disagreed with me and I'm not sure I will last the day. Given the quality of your oration last night I wonder if you might consider fulfilling my duties today?"

Steven – [Lost for words while he considers a reply]

A GBRT shot (from across the range) – "April Fool!"

A further April Fool was also set up by General Mac when the entire first detail were preparing to fire. Half the targets crept up but without faces on them. General Mac explained over the tannoy that there had been a strike and that some of the second detail shots would have to mark for the first detail. Some of the South African shots were heard to curse the butt markers and were somewhat irate (the markers having actually held a small scale strike the previous day). A good number of the detail were completely taken in by the prank before the targets were quickly faced and put up for message one. It was lost on those with double muffs though...

The day's shooting provided little challenge at 300m with many of the team going clean with high Veers. It was the 600m that proved harder with many dropping points in the 2+11 shoot. Worthy of note were three shooters, Nigel for his 55.8, Jumbo for dropping his first points having cleaned the last 460 over 11 shoots on Saturday and Monday, and Toby, for remembering not to get up after his 10th shot (on account of Iain Robertson's kind note of "bull 5, eighth on out of eleven, Toby" and "tenth on OUT OF ELEVEN, TOBY", "ONE MORE TO GO TOBY!").

After 105 points shot for already in the morning one would have thought it would be lunch time at the very least, but no. The Dave Smith Cup at 900m was to follow and conditions were not easy at all. Every grand aggregate has one, a shoot to ruin your total. This is South Africa's answer to the Corporation and the Alexander of Tunis. Most fell foul of the switching wind and a couple of elevation shots were lost in passing too. The firers certainly got their money's worth from the whiter scoring rings of the target, it must be said. And it was uncomfortably hot and sweaty.

After a brief lunch the team headed out for the (now habitual) afternoon team match. As it seems is customary, the range had laid on a mixture of shifting and static winds in searing heat and light so the coaches were sure to be tested and the locals were sure to have a good crack at the so far very high scoring GB teams in these warm up matches. The coaches laid on a good show and the firers were keen to prove themselves as selection for the next match would be influenced heavily by

performance here. Be it through more fatigue, dehydration, exposure or simple nerves, several points were dropped by each of the three GB teams and the day was apparently won by South Africans with a mere 7 off ex. 600 to our best of 13. Despite not taking a clean sweep on the warm up matches, spirits were lifted by a couple of slips of the tongue: Martin, while setting up the point to shoot explained "I'm just going to play with Jane's bits" and This Correspondent chose his words poorly when he called out loudly "Can the red team all come on me?"

That early evening a very tired team cleaned rifles in the garden and gathered for a team braai and the announcement of the team for Wednesday's SABU International Invitation Match. After apparently much deliberation, Steven and the management appeared and declared it had been a tough process and as a result, in order to get the Protea Match selection as right as possible, the match would be used as a trial (although we still clearly wanted to win). The team was:

Captain – Steven Thomas

Main Coach – Martin Townsend

Adjutant – Gary Alexander

Left Target, Coached by Matt Charlton – Adam McCullough, Ed Compton, James Lewis, Chris Watson (reserve –Nigel Ball)

Middle Target, Coached by Jane Messer – Edward Jeens, Marcus O'Leary, Richard Shouler, Jon Underwood (Reserve – David Dyson)

Right Target, Coached by Matt Ensor – Paul Sykes, Ian Davison, George Gilpin, Toby Raincock (Reserve –Parag Patel)

Shortly after the announcement, the team dispersed, either to prepare ammo for the team, write up the diary or sleep (or in This Correspondent's case, a bit of all three). And so, bleary eyed, the team once again fell in to bed ahead of another busy day on the range.