

WEDNESDAY 26th March - Protea warm-up, by That Correspondent

Quote of the day from Rick Shouler: "It was too good to be true – I got you wet" (to Lewis)

There is no prize for div of the day on this tour but it would have seen an early bid from Ian Davison, who managed to cut his nose on the tailgate of his van.

Shooting consisted of 600 & 900m in the morning, with complaints from various firers about the shadow movements from plotters and the excessive amount of noise emanating from Bluto behind the firing point ("I've got double plugs in – they'll have to deal with it!"). The morning also provided the chance to try some different ammo to the PMP being used (namely our Berger rounds for later in the meeting). This was on account of several team members having experienced chamber pressure issues. Marcus felt particularly guilty as the previous day he had had "issues" while borrowing a certain young team member's rifle, despite That Correspondent having had no such issues himself. He suggested that Marcus had clearly 'been pulling the trigger too hard' and subsequently returned to problem-free shooting when using the rifle himself.

Then came a full Protea Match practice (300, 600, 900m) in the afternoon. The latter saw the three targets complete the course of fire in less than two-thirds of the allotted hour most of the time – not bad considering the targets had five, five and six people on them as opposed to the four there would be in the match itself.

Towards the latter stages of that shoot came an interesting turn of events as Bluto was heard to complain vociferously about coaches and shooters engaging in loud mutual congratulation. I'm sure the revenge wasn't deliberate... Bluto's plotter at the time did turn to Jane and explain his amusement given his first experience of said individual, four years ago as an U19 in SA, was a colourful earful for allowing his shadow to pass over his hat while he fired. This was all part of the firing point drill refinement process.

At the end of the day's shooting and after various notices, the team went to have all the rifles scrutineered. It was presumably because of the South African weight limit being higher than our own that, for the most part, approval stickers were put on them merely if they looked similar to another one that had made weight! Additionally, given a trigger weight of 500g is allowed, no rifles were trigger weighed either. Perhaps they had known that we would all have NRA legal rifles after the Captain's pre-tour order of 'No tampering!'.

Just before heading back to the guest house for our first team braai (barbecue), we ran into two other groups from the UK: Dollar Academy and what looked like the Athelings. We won't tell which of the female chaperones it was who exclaimed "ooh, all these men!"

Toby, while driving his bus group back from the ranges, today found the optimum cornering speed of his Mercedes minivan. More at home in his BMW Z4, he has found that with the right technique a similar driving experience may be found. There is no evidence to suggest that his actions were egged on by any of his passengers and of course safe enjoyment was had by all.

Before braaing, many of the team took the time to 'push back' (shorten to appropriate length) their ammo. Dave Dyson made an excellent foreman to the operation and many new expletives were learned by all before the presses were calibrated and work was underway. This task was familiar to those recently of the 2007 Palma team but That Correspondent found it a little tedious, especially as it delayed his appearance at the braai.

After the braai half a dozen of the team returned to the Butcher's Grill bar (part of the Southern Sun hotel, formerly the Holiday Inn), to watch the England-France football match. Unfortunately, two channels were showing Portugal-Greece and one some Premier League highlights, but none had the match our boys and the Zimbabwe cricket team's management wanted to see, so it was another early bedtime in preparation for the next day.