



Great Britain Tour Diary 2006

Sunday 27th August

By This Correspondent

Those who were in the team for Sunday's America Match were tucked up in bed nice and early. Some of those who weren't, weren't. But only a few of the former were woken by any of the latter at 4am (or was it in fact participants in the Canadian Grand Masters Fiddling Championships, also staying at our hotel – I kid you not!) that were to blame? We may never know...

A slap-up (and in some cases healthy) breakfast was enjoyed by all before kick-off; one of the healthy ones was Kitty, who declared "I'm very selective about my bananas!" It was to be her and Mary's last day, as work beckoned and they were to fly home that night.

The America Match was the only story from Sunday, really. Conditions were drizzly with light wind at 300 yards. Nothing much to trouble the coaches, to be honest, but that didn't stop the team of eight dropping four points in the 15-shot course of fire. That may not sound like a lot but, at this level, it is. Canada were level with us and America were one point ahead after the first range.

As we set up on the firing point at 600 yards, the heavens opened with something resembling sleet. There did not appear to be any sign of it abating, so the Chief Range Officer announced "at least" a half hour delay and we retreated to the vans, where one target coach's snoring awoke the other. Eventually, after a remarkably well-predicted end to the downpour (Environment Canada had got it right to within a minute, it seemed), the decision was taken to declare an early lunch and shoot three ranges in the afternoon. It was going to be tough after lunch.

Maz, who had been sent with Jon Underwood in search of a gazebo to keep people and kit dry, was blissfully unaware of this. They returned, armed not with a gazebo with two rainbow-coloured umbrellas and a lot more food, only to learn that the early lunch time meant that most people had already consumed what they needed. There were still a few takers though.

After lunch we returned to 600 yards to resume battle, still one point in arrears. That did not last long, however, as the team put in an excellent performance in dull light to score 599 out of 600 at that range and draw into the lead. Truly impressive, yet such a shame not quite to have made the magical full score of 600.

Little did we know that the team had still more left in the tank. After a normal (as opposed to the usual ridiculously long) break, the match continued at 800 metres, or 880 yards in Bisley parlance. The wind moved around a bit, but there was a distinct bracket and, on a day with no useable mirage, the coaches were grateful that even small changes within that bracket were easily discernible by flag movements despite their wetness.

One by one, the firers came off the firing point: Luckman (A) 75, Calvert 75, Dix 75, Dyson 75, Morris 75, Watson 75, Coleman 75 and finally Messer 75, to give the team a full score of 600 out of 600 at 800 metres. Excellent stuff, leaving Great Britain 10 points in the lead – the opposition were also shooting well.

But there was drama still to come. As Danny's shoot had progressed, he had found it harder and harder to see, so much so that he was clearly troubled and needing to pause in the hope of improving his sight. His plotter, Michael Walton, did a great job of containing his group. It transpired that Danny had scratched his cornea, so (if I understand it correctly) was lacking sight in the centre of his eye, the bit that's rather useful if you're aiming.

The rules and the opposing teams' captains were consulted and it was agreed that Danny could be replaced by a reserve, the very same man who had plotted for him: Michael Walton. Michael was admirably prepared for such a (normally

unlikely) eventuality and slotted neatly into the team, scoring a fine 75 at 900m. He was joined by several others and the team only dropped a further three points at that range.

In effect, that meant that the team had dropped fewer points over the two long ranges than they had led by after the first two, so their position was clearly unassailable.

It meant that Great Britain's second successive 1195 at short range had been surpassed by an astonishing 1197 at long range.

And, most importantly, it meant that Great Britain had won the America Match with a superb total of 2392 out of 2400, or "8 off", where the previous record had seen some 50 further points being dropped. America and Canada had both also shot very well to beat the previous record, but this was Great Britain's day. Andy Luckman (45 Vees), Gaz Morris and David Calvert (43 Vees) all made maximum possible 300s over the day, along with Canada's Keith Cunningham.

The day at the range finished with the presentation of a lovely trophy and fine medals by the American military attaché in Canada and a couple more beers with our hosts and opponents – the match had been conducted in excellent spirit throughout, despite the weather.

America Match result (300, 600 yards, 800, 900 metres):

1. GREAT BRITAIN 2392v317
CALVERT, DAVID 300v43
COLEMAN, DANNY + WALTON, MICHAEL 298v32
DIX, RUPERT 298v37
DYSON, DAVID 299v35
LUCKMAN, ANDY 300v45
MESSER, JANE 298v45
MORRIS, GAZ 300v43
WATSON, JAMES 299v37
COACHES: CHARLTON, MATT; ROBERTS, REGINALD. MAIN: HINCHLIFFE, NICK
CAPTAIN: TOWNSEND, MARTIN; ADJUTANT: BALL, NIGEL
2. USA 2375v291
3. CANADA 2373v292
4. GERMANY 2294v196