

The Isis Tour 2017

Tourists:

Back Row: Harry Stoneman, Jon Ponsford, Joe Walter, Damo Todd, Karthik Siddireddy, Keith Ponsford, Richard Stoneman, Ravi Kella

Front Row: Nick Wyatt (captain), Olly Walter, Keith Whiter, Allan East, Matt Stanbury,



Day 1

The Journey

When Keith Whiter is alone I am sure he is a great singer. In his own house, guitar in hand, the vocals he produces are probably breathtaking. When travelling with company on the M4, however, this astonishing talent mysteriously deserts him. He climbed in the car as Michael Jackson before suddenly emitting the type of sound you might only reasonably expect to hear if Ian Botham sat on a Canadian goose. The Isis tour was like this as well. It was at its finest before reality intervened. That is why, for most, the journey was the best part of the trip, a few joyous, untroubled hours before the sweet buds of certainty were crushed in the bitter fist of optimism.

For the skipper, Nic Kwyatt, though, there was serious work to be done at this crucial time. Kwyatt said he hoped to prevent any continuation of the rich vein of form that had seen the captain's dashboard turn green. He planned to get the team working hard in the bar and staying away from the practice ground in the hope the boys could maintain the dreary cricket and indiscipline that had so characterised their performances during his long tenure. Much correspondence emphasised the need to arrive in plenty of time for drinking. The team took him at his word, with players such as Ravi Killa Kella pushing the limits and driving at speeds occasionally in excess of 50 mph. They all duly arrived at The Wildgoose Inn in Combeteignhead at the assigned time to begin ingestion. Whiter, El Presidente Ponsford and East consumed all they could despite being given beer so poor that it would later leave them writhing in agony, something not unknown to regular watchers of Isis, and the essence of which can be captured by putting on the film *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and hitting

yourself with a hammer. However, the skipper and his mate Where's (Wally) Walter were nowhere to be seen – off on their own self-inflicted wild goose chase caused by talking too much in the car.

The Match

Exeter Erratics versus Isis CC

An excursion that began so mundanely and with the great promise of promise unfulfilled was sadly left hanging in tatters after Isis recorded a win in their tour opener against Exeter Erratics. For so long the boys in white, and a few nasty stains that no-one has been entirely capable of eradicating, have wallowed in tours of perpetual mediocrity. This calamitous result threatened to catapult the club to a successful expedition.

Isis took to the field shorn of two key players. Erratics had nine men which made the contest fairly even but Isis, with thirteen players, found the odds swinging dramatically in their favour when they were allowed to give the Exeter team Matt 'owww' Stanbury and Joe Walter Disney.

A good track in a beautiful elevated setting among West Country rolling hills saw Erratics elect to bat and Keith 'Jacko' Whiter opened the bowling. As usual his first spell was economical but there was a surprise decision to open from the other end with El Presidente Ponsford, the skipper no doubt looking for some cheap and easy wickets at the back end of the innings.

Early wickets saw Mattowww Stanbury come to the crease and it was not long before he was incapacitated trying to sweep. This was an injury so serious that he was later forced to keep wicket for the Devon Club. Karthik 'Where's my thermals?' Siddireddy and Junior Ponsford bowled economically and took wickets but it was left to 'Young Harry' Stoneman, the captain and the BEast to give away enough runs to keep alive the quest for a narrow defeat. This backfired dramatically when El Presidente Ponsford returned and claimed four quick wickets including that of a charging Walter Disney who was stumped Inside Out by Kella. Coach Keith Whiter gave a technical insight into Walter's dismissal. 'Actually, I think you will find his body shape's all wrong. When he struck that shot he looked like a camel on a tandem.' However, the returning Whiter was able to help the Exeter club to a respectable total by bowling like a drain.

The fielding included a first ever stumping for Kella and a spectacular one handed catch by El Presidente Ponsford. However, the highlight was the phantom urchin, Karthik, who looked permanently goosebumped by a chill wind, cuffs grasped in fists and shoulders hunched against the weather like the chesty lad who foolishly persuaded his mother not to send a note to the PE master seeking permission to keep his vest on during games.

A revised batting order saw BEast open with Oh Wally Walter. Joe Walter Disney, opened the bowling for Erratics having convinced them that he was a medium paced bowler and that Pinocchio was a story about an elephant with ears that helped him fly.

However, an early and totally avoidable run out saw the end of Beauty versus the BEast. Despite an opener being back in the pavilion early on the Wally was not to be put off his stride.

'Running out BEasty was a sacrifice I had to make for the team,' said the longstanding opener. 'He had no idea what he was doing coming in and playing shots all around the ground at a run a ball. An opener has to put Isis first and scratch around for the best part of 35 overs before getting out for 46 and avoiding paying for a jug. It is our duty to make this game look bloody difficult and guarantee others struggle because they have to score so quickly to make up for lost time. Some people might

think I am being selfish but nothing could be further from the truth. Did you see the way I threw my wicket away at the end to ensure the skipper got to face two balls for his 400 mile round trip?’

Young Harry Stoneman made a quick fire 26 and Killa Kella smashed a very impressive and controlled half century as Isis sauntered to victory. The only bright spot for the skipper was the failure of the ringer Damo Sweeney Todd who was clean bowled for one. The skipper explained his thinking.

‘I have always been a great believer in the maxim “If you want a job doing properly you should hire someone from Europe to do it for you”. But sadly since Brexit none seemed to be available so I came up with the idea of bringing in a South African who has played no cricket at all this season and is on massive amounts of debilitating painkillers. I think it worked out pretty well.’

A comfortable five wicket victory was not marred at all by the slight bruising to Oh Walter’s toe which could be clearly seen using the Hubble Telescope.

The Evening Out

With little time to spare the team made its way to the pub where justifiably excessive fines were given to Joe and the moaning Mattowww. This was followed by a quick turnaround in Exeter before setting out on the town.

There was plenty to discover as the team met in the hotel lobby. Joe Walter was there with his trimmed goatee with all its unsettling hints at a midlife crisis, and the possibility of intimate tattoos and genital piercings hidden from view.

We noticed that Damo Sweeney Todd smells as if he likes nothing better than to loiter round the Laboratoire Garnier counter in his spare time discussing whether fruit micro oils with added jojoba oil are truly compatible with his type of dry, delicate skin.

Junior Ponsford we quickly realised is a proponent of moisturiser. Apparently the pace bowler never leaves the dressing room without first rubbing soothing and possibly pH-balancing unguents into his cheeks to counter the dermatological ravages of any south westerly breeze.

Young Harry, meanwhile wore clothing that looked like the symptoms of migraine whilst Captain Kwyatt had made good use of the wide range of attire found in Marks and Spencers’ Crimplene Slacks Fashion Clothing Department.

However, El Presidente Ponsford failed to dress appropriately and take inspiration from a young Chris Waddle. There was no sign of a streaked mullet or double-breasted jacket with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows.

After the game the skipper had said it was time the team took a good look at themselves in the mirror and it was clear many had taken him at his word.

Young Harry was tasked with finding the group somewhere to eat taking into account the captain’s desire for a healthy dietary preparation for the next day so we jumped in taxis to the nearest curry house. Kwyatt insisted the old school diet of sausage and chips was to be no more and the key to success was moving with the times and infrequent washing. He offered wise counsel on diet. Madras and Vindaloo should be consumed because of their laxative properties. The only liquid to be imbibed was to be ale. However, because it was a tour, shots could be taken but not more than half a pint of them. Vegetables, he concluded, should not be consumed in any quantity as they would add to already significant flatulence. This is something Mattowww Stanbury readily confirmed through the night.

Following the sustenance Young Harry led several menopausal blokes seeking to exorcise the ghosts of failing marriages and a number of 40+-year-old middle managers with two children, a large mortgage, a Ford Focus on 0% finance and a rapidly expanding waistline to a pub in the city. There they sat, drank to excess and cured the world of all its ills before wandering aimlessly back to the hotel fully primed for the following days sporting challenge.

Day 2

Breakfast

After an unseemly scramble for the toilets and a large greasy breakfast the team gathered for the journey to Bristol. The skipper, concerned at the long injury list, stated his intention to wrap El Presidente Ponsford in cotton wool in the hope of keeping him fit for the day's game. This was soon dismissed due to the obvious fact that covering the burly President with cotton wool would cause a worldwide shortage with serious implications for hospitals everywhere.

With that the journey to the final game began.

The Match Temple Cloud CC versus Isis

The team, made up of the characteristic Isis mix of the hungover, the lonely, the goose-pimpled and the gormless took to the field in less than perfect condition. What with Mattowwww Stanbury's hip, El Presidente Ponsford's back, Oh Walter's toe and several senior players having strained groins dashing to the lavatory in the night the list of the wounded was long. Stumpy Stoneman was later to blame a series of misfields on the fact that the flap of his oxygen tent was blowing in his eyes.

Isis took to the field but it was only three overs into the game before the one remaining fit player was back in the pavilion. Junior Ponsford, in attempting to emulate Jeff Thomson by bouncing out the promising 15 year old Temple Cloud opener, pulled a hamstring.

What was behind this spate of injuries? People will say it is just bad luck though it is obvious to anyone that in this case the more exercise you take the unluckier you get.

To be blunt some Isis cricketers are too fit to play games. Over the past few years players like Kella, Junior Ponsford, Kwyatt, Henry and Stephenson have maintained their athleticism remorselessly. They have abandoned the traditional training programme of short shuttle runs between the pub and Greggs that served colossi of yesteryear such as Ray Cherry, Jim Clemson and Dave Penhallurick. The only thing that was likely to be ripped to the max on a cricket field with those people was the seat of Keith Whiter's trousers if he bent down too far at slip. We have been berated by the skipper for our lack of fitness in the field but frankly my idea of a fit person is not somebody lying on a bench with his toe in the air drinking beer whilst waiting to bat.

In addition there is the psychological effect of too much physical training. Recent research proved categorically that the fitter someone is the more they whinge. I asked Young Harry Stoneman, an average slob with his stomach hanging over the top of his newly acquired comfort fit slacks like a rucksack filled with wet cement, how he was and he responded, "Not bad, thanks." Point proven.

Furthermore, Stumpy Stoneman has soft, black hair and smooth skin. His physique is finely sculpted, though only if the sculpture you had in mind was something by Henry Moore. His strict daily work-out of two squat thrusts, a sit-up and a pork pie may not have given him toned pecs and rock solid gluteus, but believe me he could run about the outfield quicker during this game than Junior Ponsford or Mattowwww Stanbury unless, of course, someone told them they were batting.

Temple Cloud took to the field and began in ominous fashion flailing Whiter and BEast to all parts of the ground. Whiter took this all in his usual good spirits. The skipper had fine words of encouragement for his bowlers though.

'Don't worry, BEasty, relax and enjoy yourself. You are bowling on one of the best tracks in the county,' he pronounced in gentle tones before wandering away muttering, 'Which is not surprising given all the shite you are putting on it.'

Isis plugged away taking wickets at regular intervals which were shared around. Siddireddy took three bowling into a gale force wind with BEast and El Presidente Ponsford taking a brace apiece. Even the captain made a small contribution to the cricket with a wicket.

The Isis fielding was characterised by its unmeasurable, indefinable qualities of hunger, passion, grit, fortitude and, less notably, letting the ball through the legs, waving at the ball as it passed through the hands and unexplainably toppling over. Killa Kella led the determined response by encouraging Siddireddy throughout. During the tour you felt that if Killa found his good friend lying face down in a cowpat, he would not haul him to his feet and gently wipe his cheeks with a hankie while muttering soft words of reassurance. No, he would thump the toe of his boot on the back of his bonce and twist it from side to side until his ankle got tired.

After 35 overs the Cloud had amassed an impressive 208 runs. Captain Kwyatt was well aware of the need for something special so laid hands on the injured trio saying, 'Rise, Oh Walter, Owww and Junior, take up your bats and walk.' And they did. Surprisingly quickly. He also said, 'El Presidente, you may be a stalwart of the club and top wicket taker on tour but your pear shaped body and slight smell of mildew means you must make way for the infirm.' He then turned to the BEast explaining, 'I have already granted you the opportunity for an elegant cameo and I need somebody to carry my jumper. You, too, must make way.' So they did. With perhaps a little less haste than was expected. The decision was obviously flawed from the start. Even a fool knows that nicknames reveal all about the character of a player. Needing to drop two players who would you choose from Stumpy, Wally, Owww, Junior, El Presidente and the BEast?

The Isis reply followed a familiar pattern with Oh Walter doing all he could to preserve his wicket and ensure that Isis fell behind the rate needed. Young Harry Stoneman was then caught behind. This was one of those jolting moments when a great athlete suddenly ages before your eyes. One minute he was the very apex of focused dynamism, the next he was wearing the befuddled look of a man who had just opened a cupboard door and could not for the life of him remember what he was looking for. Young Harry had grown old.

The match was then turned on its head by the arrival of The Sweeney. Damo Todd's batting was something to behold. David Gower played with an elegance and grace making love to the ball. Damo, on the other hand played as though he preferred to give it a quick hump before mutilating the Cloud attack with a chainsaw. He racked up a quick-fire 40 and left Isis in charge. A very fine and measured Walter Disney 30 kept Isis in front before Killa Kella showed the consistency for which he is renowned by following his half century in Exeter with a duck. When the mortally wounded Walter lost his wicket, when yet again nearing a jug defining moment, a series of damaged players came and went quickly. A remarkably agile Stanbury was stumped and an extraordinary inflexible Stumpy Stoneman run out. A rapidly rising run rate was a daunting task for the hamstrung Junior Ponsford and Keith 'Jacko' Whiter, making his tour batting debut. A flurry of boundaries including two delicious straight drives from Whiter offered brief hope but the run rate continued to rise in the face of accurate bowling and to the relief of everyone Isis fell 10 runs short.

Captain Ni Kwyatt reflected on a tour gone moderately well before everyone departed.

'This has been an overwhelming disaster for me personally,' he said. 'I came here with the express intention of losing both games and ensuring everyone left frustrated at their lack of opportunity to play. As it is I have failed on both fronts. These players have brought the club into disrepute by continuously competing to win and their unremitting cheerfulness.'

He later expressed his desire to improve future performances by introducing a series of humiliating measures based on his considerable experience in primary school classrooms. 'I intend to write a stiff letter of complaint to the parents of Once Young Harry and Junior Ponsford, throw some chalk and a blackboard rubber at the back of the head of both the Walters and administer Chinese burns to Kella and Damo. As for the rest they will all write out 100 times "I have let myself and everyone else down by my selfless and thoughtful behaviour." It gives me no pleasure to do this and you can be sure it will hurt me as much as it hurts them.'

When asked what could be done to improve next year's tour he had no hesitation in suggesting taking the club ambulance, greater quantities of absorbent underwear and numerous tubes of Poligrip dental fixative.

For further information on the tour the captain can be seen this Saturday at the President's XI game. He will be the one staring, dead-eyed into the darkness, rocking back and forth and murmuring to himself.

Roll on the 2018 tour.