

TOUR REPORT – 2009 Season

23rd – 25th May 2009

A short journey to Bristol saw Isis arrive at their Premier Inn hotel in warm, pleasant conditions for the first day of the 'Dale Jacobs Tour 2009'. The day had begun with the disappointing news that Paul 'Ridley' Jacobs was not well enough to join the party - leaving 11 men good and true to embark upon a weekend of beer, curry, cricket and more.

After a brisk check-in the Isis crew hopped into a taxi-bus and headed towards the clubhouse of local side Temple Cloud. The village team (Rich Appleyard's local club) were entertaining a Watchet 2nd XI in a league game, and they cruised to victory in front of their biggest crowd of the season. Along the short boundary the Isis rabble clapped, cheered, drank and gambled - the batsmen admiring the straw-coloured wicket and the tiny boundaries; the bowlers quivering as the ball sailed to the boundary following the merest of tickles from the batsman. Isis would return the following day to play a classic against a local pub side.

As the evening drew in the boys (all now men, following Dale's 18th earlier this year) headed back towards the hotel for a quick shower before meeting in the hotel bar for a pint or two. This allowed us to discover that the name Richard means 'beautifully groomed' in Latin (Appleyard took a bubble bath causing us to be late, plus Richie Ramps a few years ago and Stephenson's decorative shirt).

Dale Jacobs lacks experience when it comes to playing drinking games (I'd like to say he learned as he played - but I've never seen anyone fall for the left hand drinking rule so many times, whilst already consuming as a punishment for not being able to remember his own rules in 21's). Bristol hosts its fair share of stags and hens. We saw The Incredible Hulk, Spiderman, Bananaman, Superman and all their friends. With time ticking on, and the thought of Wiblin (late arrival) joining the party whilst in the vicinity of a hen and her chicks, we headed out of the hotel and down towards a local cider bar. An hour (Olly was in charge of the map) later and we were all ready for a stiff drink. As young-pup of the touring party Dale was just about to get exactly that, as a traditional cask of 8.4% cider was kindly selected for him by his good friends. Fortunately he drank his half pint slower than Dave Penhallurick bowls/Wiblin runs the first run/Wyatt's strike rate with the bat, and the teenage bowling sensation (dressed as ever in his ridiculous sunglasses) was beginning to get frisky as Wiblin arrived to point out every short skirt Dale might miss. Hosts Andy James and Rich Appleyard then herded us off towards a vodka bar - surely the very words spell trouble!! After a few racks, containing various flavoured potions, a somewhat jaded (drunken) crew headed out onto the streets of Bristol. For some it was time to stagger towards a comfy hotel bed, whilst younger members embarked upon an important mission of enlightenment (see Dale Jacobs to become further abreast of this).

Sunday brought much the same weather as Saturday (warm and sunny). This, and heavy heads, encouraged most of us to skip the allotted 9am breakfast slot, in favour of a more sociable hour. When we did gather (Brendan and Si having headed off for the one-sided international between England and the Windies) together for brunch a veritable feast was had by all, and the opportunity was taken for those that had accompanied Jacobs Jnr to spill the beans as to why he was grinning like a Lester Whitby after five pints. Needless to say whatever had tickled Jugsy's fancy, he was quite keen to revisit her again that evening!

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Gossip shared, we were gratefully picked up once more by our taxi-driver Buster; and on arrival at the ground we were allowed to nurse our hangovers by batting first. Joe, in particular, looked white as a sheet.

The pre-match warm-up highlighted the amount of cider still left in the system, as our attempts to impress the local side with our athleticism and catching skills were short lived due to injury and poor judgement. A short boundary and a slope had led to great excitement amongst the Isis willow wielders - indeed it had been literally hours since we'd seen Wiblin so goggle-eyed and dribbling at the mouth. Yet early wickets put Isis firmly on the back-foot. After a solid 42 from Rich Stephenson, we were fortunate that Roy and Luke had joined us for the day and Blatchford Snr went about pulling three early deliveries for four to put us back on course for a respectable score. Wiblin also chipped in with a cheeky 30 - including a glorious six and a ridiculous five (both of which we'll be hearing about for decades to come)!

With 164 on the board Isis had to work darn hard for victory on what was a tiny ground compared to Queens and SSJ. Both with ball, and in the field, Isis kept grinding away in balmy conditions though, with Whiter and Wyatt eventually draining the scoring opportunities out of the Ring O'Bells XI.

A satisfying win often makes the world seem a brighter place, but as we sat on the outfield after the game, beer in hand, sun beating down, two balloons drifting overhead, there wasn't a place in the world that any of us would rather be (apart from Dale maybe, who was distracted by the call of a wild cat or dog out across the rolling hills). However, following a fines meeting chaired by Keith Whiter, enough loose change had been fleeced out of Dale to pay our bar tab, and thus we were on our way again.

Isis wouldn't be properly on tour without consuming enough curry to blow down the third pig's house, so no sooner had Richard Appleyard taken another bubble bath we were heading towards our evening (10pm) meal. From the lukewarm to the bloomin' hot a good feast was had by all. What more can a man ask for than ale, great tucker and Wiblin recounting the tales of Bobby B*ll*ck and his penchant for dot balls and long walks. Upon noting that certain establishments were closed (either due to being drunk-dry the night before, or possibly from having their owners retire thanks to Dale's expenditure) for the weekend, Isisians were left with a choice of poker or night clubbing. Some danced the night away, some gambled their money away, some got lucky, some did not!

Monday morning brought drizzle and uncertainty, but after consuming several piglets and a cask of orange juice Isis headed north towards Leonard Stanley. On arrival the spitting eased and the sun threatened to pop its head through. As the opposition arrived one or two Isisians began to jump the gun, with predictions of a comfortable victory being on the cards. In the end it was - with the home side cruising to victory. Lester's 50 not out and a tidy 21 from Brendan Lewis were the only highlights. Leonard Stanley had one or two big hitters in their team; with several of the Isis attack being despatched into local hedgerows and gardens!

A quick pint afterwards saw the 2009 tour brought to the end in the best possible way. All-in-all a fantastic weekend.

NB: **Thanks to:** Andy James and Rich Appleyard for their local knowledge; Buster the taxi driver; Keith Whiter for the fines; Roy and Luke for joining us on the Sunday; and to Dale for making a fine touring debut (off the pitch that is).