

**England Men's Water Polo  
7<sup>th</sup> Annual North Sea Competition  
Charleroi, Belgium  
11-13 April 2003  
Travel: 10 & 13 April 2003**

**Team Staff:** Mark Taylor – Coach. Stephen Baker – Manager.

**Athletes:** David Bush, Michael Thomas, Neil Bowers, Craig Figes, Ivan Drinkwater, Ashley King, Graham Martin-Dye, Jonathon Stafford, Chris Evans, Matthew Thresher, David Taylor, Daniel Williams.

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| <b>Date final team names confirmed with office (office use only):</b>    | 07 March & 2 April 2003 |
| <b>Date selection letter sent to team from office (office use only):</b> |                         |

|  |                              |      |              |      |      |
|--|------------------------------|------|--------------|------|------|
| <b>ASSEMBLY</b>  |                              |      |              |      |      |
| <b>Flights</b>   | <b>Excellent</b>             | Good | Satisfactory | Fair | Poor |
| <b>Airline/s used:</b>   | Ryan Air                     |      |              |      |      |
| <b>Airport/s used:</b>   | Liverpool/Stansted/Charleroi |      |              |      |      |
| <b>Comments (if any - please keep brief):</b> Yasmeen did a great job in getting the arrival times very close and ticketing arranged despite late player changes |                              |      |              |      |      |

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| <b>Office Response</b> |
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|---|------------------|------|--------------|------|------|
| <b>KIT &amp; DISTRIBUTION</b>   |                  |      |              |      |      |
|   | <b>Excellent</b> | Good | Satisfactory | Fair | Poor |
| <b>Comments (if any - please keep brief):</b><br>Diana kit looks good although the sizing is sometimes a little bizarre |                  |      |              |      |      |

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| <b>Office Response</b> |
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| <b>ACCOMMODATION</b>   |                  |             |                     |      |      |
| <b>Rooms</b>   | Excellent        | Good        | <b>Satisfactory</b> | Fair | Poor |
| <b>Location (from pool and other facilities)</b>   | <b>Excellent</b> | Good        | Satisfactory        | Fair | Poor |
| <b>Meals/Food</b>  | Excellent        | Good        | <b>Satisfactory</b> | Fair | Poor |
| <b>General Service</b>   | Excellent        | <b>Good</b> | Satisfactory        | Fair | Poor |
| <b>Accommodation name, address and contact numbers:</b><br>Ibis Hotel, Charleroi   |                  |             |                     |      |      |
| <b>Comments (if any - please keep brief):</b> Unlike the Belgians normal standards, this was average. All athletes were accommodated in the same hotel. Food was served at the pool. |                  |             |                     |      |      |

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| <b>Office Response</b> |
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|--|------------------|-------------|--------------|------|-------------|
| <b>TRAINING VENUE (if appropriate)</b>   |                  |             |              |      |             |
| <b>Location (from hotel and other facilities)</b>  | <b>Excellent</b> | Good        | Satisfactory | Fair | Poor        |
| <b>Facilities</b>  | Excellent        | <b>Good</b> | Satisfactory | Fair | Poor        |
| <b>Access</b>  | <b>Excellent</b> | Good        | Satisfactory | Fair | Poor        |
| <b>Optional support Services (access to sports science etc)</b>                                      | Excellent        | Good        | Satisfactory | Fair | <b>Poor</b> |
| <b>Venue name, address and contact numbers:</b><br>Charleroi pool. Access via the Belgian federation |                  |             |              |      |             |
| <b>Comments (if any - please keep brief):</b>  |                  |             |              |      |             |

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| <b>Office Response</b> |
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| <b>COMPETITION VENUE (if appropriate)</b>   |                  |             |                     |      |             |
|---|------------------|-------------|---------------------|------|-------------|
| <b>Location (from pool and other facilities)</b>  | <b>Excellent</b> | Good        | Satisfactory        | Fair | Poor        |
| <b>Facilities</b>   | Excellent        | <b>Good</b> | Satisfactory        | Fair | Poor        |
| <b>Access</b>   | <b>Excellent</b> | Good        | Satisfactory        | Fair | Poor        |
| <b>Support Services</b>   | Excellent        | Good        | Satisfactory        | Fair | <b>Poor</b> |
| <b>Competition Organisation</b>   | Excellent        | Good        | <b>Satisfactory</b> | Fair | Poor        |
| <b>Any local support services bought in</b>   | Excellent        | Good        | Satisfactory        | Fair | <b>Poor</b> |
| <b>Doping Control</b>   | Yes / No         |             |                     |      |             |
| <b>Venue name, address and contact numbers:</b><br>Charleroi pool. Access via the Belgian federation  |                  |             |                     |      |             |
| <b>Comments (if any - please keep brief):</b><br>Pool is not international standard as a result of diving boards obstructing the referee access. Otherwise it is an 8 lane, 1.8 m deep pool |                  |             |                     |      |             |

**Office Response**

| <b>ADMINISTRATION</b>   |                  |      |              |      |             |
|---|------------------|------|--------------|------|-------------|
| <b>Communication with office</b>  | <b>Excellent</b> | Good | Satisfactory | Fair | Poor        |
| <b>Information from Organisers</b>  | Excellent        | Good | Satisfactory | Fair | <b>Poor</b> |
| <b>Comments (if any - please keep brief):</b> Belgian Federation changed programme until the very competition and were not good in returning communiqués. |                  |      |              |      |             |

**Office Response**

| <b>COSTINGS (For use by Water Polo Team Managers controlling own budgets only)</b> |
|--|
| To be completed when all final costings are available.                             |

| <b>RESULTS</b>   |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| <p>England won the tournament despite bringing in a number of new younger players following last year's Commonwealth Games.</p> <p>England have therefore made history by becoming the first team in the competition's 7 year history to retain the title which we won in Sheffield last year.</p> <p>This year the competition consisted of 6 teams with the England results:</p> |                 |
| V Denmark  | w 8-5           |
| V Ireland  | w 11-4          |
| V Sweden   | w 8-4           |
| V Scotland   | w 7-6           |
| V Belgium  | w 6-2           |
| Final Points Table   |                 |
| England  | 10              |
| Belgium  | 8               |
| Ireland  | 6               |
| Denmark  | 4               |
| Scotland   | 2               |
| Sweden   | 0               |
| Belgium, Denmark and Sweden are all currently in Euro B.   |                 |
| <b>Full set of official results sent to office by team manager (office use only)</b>   | <b>Yes / No</b> |

## Coach report

### 1. Summary.

The North Sea Cup competition was played a month later than prior year and England had 6 changes to the team but it made no difference to the result.

A win for England in this important competition, representing the third win in the competition between the original teams and fourth not including guest teams. Importantly another historic milestone was passed with England becoming the first team in the competition's seven year history to retain the title.

This is the seventh year of competition and represents good competition against quality European B division teams.

### 2. Team.

|                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Bowers, Neil.       | Lancaster. Capt.     |
| 2. Bush, David.        | Bristol.             |
| 3. Drinkwater, Ivan.   | Polytechnic.         |
| 4. Evans, Chris.       | Hammersmith Penguin. |
| 5. Figes, Craig.       | Bristol.             |
| 6. King, Ashley.*      | Rotherham.           |
| 7. Martin-Dye, Graham. | Hammersmith Penguin. |
| 8. Stafford, Jonathon. | Tyldesley.           |
| 9. Taylor, David.*     | Cheltenham.          |
| 10. Thomas, Michael.   | Cheltenham.          |
| 11. Thresher, Matthew. | Bristol.             |
| 12. Williams, Daniel.  | Polytechnic.         |

Taylor, Mark. *Coach.* Bristol.  
Baker, Stephen *Manager* Hammersmith Penguin.

- New cap.

### 3. Statistics.

#### Results.

#### Full tournament results.

|                           |              |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Scotland v Belgium</b> | <b>7-9</b>   |
| <b>Ireland v Sweden</b>   | <b>13-10</b> |
| <b>England v Denmark</b>  | <b>8-5</b>   |
| <b>Belgium v Sweden</b>   | <b>11-7</b>  |
| <b>Scotland v Denmark</b> | <b>10-11</b> |
| <b>England v Ireland</b>  | <b>11-4</b>  |
| <b>Scotland v Ireland</b> | <b>5-11</b>  |
| <b>England v Sweden</b>   | <b>8-4</b>   |
| <b>Belgium v Denmark</b>  | <b>9-3</b>   |
| <b>England v Scotland</b> | <b>7-6</b>   |
| <b>Sweden v Denmark</b>   | <b>3-5</b>   |
| <b>Belgium v Ireland</b>  | <b>10-9</b>  |
| <b>Denmark v Ireland</b>  | <b>7-9</b>   |
| <b>Scotland v Sweden</b>  | <b>8-7</b>   |

**Final Positions: 1- England – 10 pts, 2- Belgium – 8 pts, 3- Ireland – 6 pts, 4- Denmark – 4 pts, 5- Scotland – 2 pts. 6 – Sweden – 0 pts.**

#### Goalscorers.

Figes, Martin-Dye 7 each  
Bowers, Drinkwater 6 each  
Evans, Williams 4 each  
Stafford, Thomas, Thresher 2 each

NB 9 scorers out of 11 outfield players.

### **Major statistics.**

| <u>Versus</u> | <u>For</u> | <u>Conv</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>Pen</u> | <u>Con</u> | <u>Against</u> | <u>Conv</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>Pen</u> | <u>Conv</u> |
|---------------|------------|-------------|----------|------------|------------|----------------|-------------|----------|------------|-------------|
| Denmark       | 9          | 3           | 33       | 0          | 0          | 2              | 1           | 50       | 0          | 0           |
| Ireland       | 8          | 6           | 75       | 0          | 0          | 6              | 2           | 33       | 0          | 1           |
| Sweden        | 8          | 2           | 25       | 1          | 1          | 8              | 2           | 25       | 0          | 0           |
| Scotland      | 5          | 3           | 60       | 1          | 1          | 6              | 3           | 50       | 0          | 0           |
| Belgium       | 1          | 1           | 100      | 0          | 0          | 4              | 1           | 25       | 1          | 1           |

### **Individual majors.**

Drinkwater, Evans, Thresher 4 each  
Bowers 3  
Stafford, Williams 2 each  
Figs, Martin-Dye, Taylor 1 each

### **4. Team performance.**

Last year the opening of this section read thus: *"This is probably the best performance by an England team for very many years and eclipsed the performance in winning the same event in 2000. The skills and tactics learned in the training camps in Serbia were clear. The discipline, man down defence, positional play and overall control have improved considerably from previous years."*

Despite the fact that there have been 6 changes to the Commonwealth bronze medal team of last year, the performance remains very strong. The team skills and disciplines learned in the Serbian training camps have set this team very strongly. This is especially evidenced by the quality of the defence. In the competition, England scored less than Belgium and Ireland and only three more than Scotland. However, the goal difference was +19, a full 10 goals better than the second placed Belgium, conceding only 21 goals in 5 matches. This defensive quality and discipline is the cornerstone of the team's performance.

As mentioned earlier, this is the first time that a team has retained the competition.

The man up versus man down statistics for the event 48% vs 31% tells its own story. The attacking statistics are poorer than last year but defensively identical. This is only to be expected of a team in transition.

The one significant change with this side versus the prior year is that it is even more dangerous on the fast break due to the introduction of younger players and settling down of the tactics.

### **Individual match reports.**

#### V Denmark

#### 8-5 (3-1, 2-0, 1-2, 2-2)

England had the game won by half time when they were 5-1 ahead. 3 counter goals, and others from pit and man up put the game in our hands.

The second half was lost 3-4 but England never looked out of control. Interestingly, the first two quarter scores matched those from the first game last year and in the authors opinion show the value of the Italian training camp for a rapid start in a major competition.

6 scorers showed a balanced team play.

## V Ireland.

11-4 (1-0, 4-0, 1-2, 5-2)

Ireland were surprisingly good in this competition as a result of considerable recent investment in the team and an American import.

This was Ireland's heaviest defeat and was testimony to England's ability to dominate from the off. As with the previous match, England were 5-0 ahead by half time and the game as a contest over. Goals from counter attack and man up demonstrated again the rapid start that England have developed.

Again 6 different scorers and an excellent 75% man up conversion rate.

## V Sweden.

8-4 (4-2, 1-1, 2-0, 1-1)

This match was a lot closer than would have been expected. Sweden for the second year finished bottom. However, the Swedes resorted to very heavy tactics to try and stem the England movement. However, again a selection of goals from counter, pit and extra man saw a victory.

## V Scotland.

7-6 (3-1, 1-1, 1-1, 2-3)

Scotland used tried and tired methods against England of gamesmanship and heavy play. After early English domination and being 4-1 ahead as early as halfway through period 2, the Scots literally hauled themselves back to 6-6 with 4 minutes to play.

The crowd loved it, but it was not a pretty spectacle.

England put the game to bed with a 7m goal from Ivan Drinkwater with 27 seconds to play.

It may not have been pretty but it was a stern and good test of the moral fabric of the team.

## v Belgium.

6-2 (3-0, 1-0, 1-1, 1-1)

The two teams met at 9.00 am on Sunday morning to decide the championship. England again raced to a 4-0 halftime lead, including a penalty save from David Bush and 2 defended man downs (100%).

The game was never seriously in doubt after that.

## **5. Other matters.**

### Finance.

Final finances to be completed, but an economical, 2 game per day event.

### Accommodation.

The team stayed in the Ibis Hotel in Charleroi. Functional rather than pleasant, all meals except breakfast were served at the pool.

### Facilities.

The match was played at the Charleroi municipal baths. Although an 8 lane, 1.8 m deep pool, it was not perfect due to diving boards interfering with referee movement and poor daytime lighting from the sun.

### Medical.

There were no medical problems.

### Preparation.

England went on a 3 day training camp in Nervi, Italy, consisting of 4 training sessions and 3 matches against A standard teams.

Prior to the camp and as a direct result of this year being the start of a 3 year cycle to the 2006 Commonwealth games, trials and training in Manchester and London took place.

For the trials every national league club coach was consulted.

We also undertook a clinic for coaches to introduce them to the England tactics.

## **6. Additional matters.**

Chris Freebury attended as referee.

The team continues to develop well despite the loss of a number of key players through retirement or other commitments.

The Serbian involvement in the team has been invaluable and it is the team management's intention to continue to invest in these skills and tactics.

Gary Simons was appointed as team assistant coach but due to career change was unable to take up his posting.

A number of players who were selected and expected to participate withdrew at the last moment for career based reasons. Two key players included Kevin Williams and Richard Leighton.

Mark Taylor. Team Coach.

S.W.Baker. Team Manager.