

BIARRITZ RUGBY REPORT 2010

Biarritz is a hotbed of French rugby and is situated around some very big and famous French rugby clubs; we were on the outskirts of Biarritz and also near to Bayonne.

When we arrived in France my first thought was that the hotel the tour company had booked for us was remarkably close to the airport.....and we seemed to be a good distance from any training facilities let alone the City centre; this left us with a slight dilemma: how do we get around?

The first morning was set aside for training at a nearby rugby club 'D'Anglet', it was around a 40 minute walk or a 5 minute bus ride. We therefore went with the bus!

Training was excellent however, the boys worked hard and looked extremely good for the game that afternoon against a tough team in 'B.A.L', this club was an amalgamation of three local towns. Therefore our starting XV would be very strong for this night-time game played under floodlights.

The ground was around 10 miles from Pau, another big rugby team from the South. Pau is set amongst the Pyrenean mountain range. The coach trip was long but very enjoyable. Two Bedstonians who were particularly impressed were Tom Lewis and Oli Uffold who found themselves mesmerised by the fencing of farm land, the use of tractors and particularly **these** tractors since they weren't the standard Massey Ferguson or John Deere on which these two were experts. Despite having to listen to these two and their interminable discussions on the variation of farming techniques, the boys arrived in good spirits!

The game started with the surprise news that we couldn't play on the 1st XV pitch but instead would have to play on the training pitch. I wasn't very happy and so poor old Mr. Chadderton (Head of Modern Languages) had to translate my displeasure. The local council had apparently said the pitch needed to be preserved for the weekend but the training pitch was average at best!

The game was played in relatively poor light but proved to be very entertaining, aggressive and a good physical encounter that was good to watch despite the near freezing temperature.

B.A.L 19 BEDSTONE COLLEGE 10

They were a big set of forwards and extremely well drilled, a typical French side that were aggressive and dynamic particularly around the contact area.

The French forwards soon got into the game and scored from a driving lineout, much to my despair!

After some excellent back play and quick ruck ball from our forwards Harvey Miller was given the ball in space, he used his pace to get round their defence and scored a superb try in the corner, the conversion, sadly, was missed.

Greg Powell who had a superb game was running through the French defence and was constantly being a menace with some good tackles and some excellent turn overs of French possession. This gave us a good platform to launch attacks and opportunities to score. We couldn't quite get over the line and, as a result, we fell further behind after a well worked try by the French in the corner.

With around 25 minutes left Dan Mara, returning from injury, got his first game for 18 months (due to injuries) and managed to get on the score sheet with a short burst after good work from Nash, Chamberlain and then Powell who had got us 3 yards from the line. Dan did the rest.

Despite a further score from our French counterparts, it was a good game of fast physical rugby and the issues with the flood lights it was an enjoyable game.

One of the most amusing parts of the tour came after this game during the post match entertainment, Mr. Chadderton had taken Seb Sykes to hospital owing to an injury earlier in the game, and this meant that my language skills were tested to the full. I am not noted as a linguist (how many PE teachers are?) And I resorted to much gesturing and hand signals to get my messages across. Importantly we were understood and were able to express our thanks for an enjoyable game and great hospitality.

Being in the Basque country we needed to discover the local cuisine and our hosts were keen to show us but this did leave me feeling a little anxious about what to expect. We started with generous quantities of baguettes and local pate which was great; they did however say that this was a starter and not the main course. When the main course came out it looked like steak in a garlic sauce, the boys tucked in and all was fine. As I began my linguistic lesson, the host casually asked "how do you like the *canard* heart?" It was only then that I realized what we were eating (apparently a local delicacy). I was pleasantly surprised but knew that we had some very fussy eaters on tour (Andy Nash??). I told Andy it was "just steak with garlic, enjoy!" After his second baguette I broke the news to him. To say that he was horrified would be a huge understatement. He hardly spoke to anyone after this, as they say 'every cloud has a silver lining'!

The following day was training in the morning followed by a gym session in the afternoon. The gym is an integral area of modern day rugby and a great chance for the boys to train together away from the rugby training paddock.

On the Sunday we were away to Ordizia, a Spanish town right on the French border again in a rugby loving area of the Basque country.

The match was played on a 3G pitch which is an artificial surface that has been approved by the RFU and should allow fast flowing rugby. I was pleasantly surprised on arrival

with the surface, it was a fantastic pitch elevated from the main sports centre and other pitches . Ordizia plays in the Spanish Rugby Premier league and so the standard and quality of facilities were first class.

The game was a much better standard and a much improved performance.

ORDIZIA 5 BEDSTONE COLLEGE 24

The lineout started well, Jon Cox managed to hit his jumpers and consequently we had the platform to unleash our back line with Fraser Ogden pulling the strings and Andy Nash enjoying a run at centre with his Welsh team mate Tom Morgan.

Big Welsh prop Tom ‘Spud’ Lewis was playing out of position but did an excellent job along with the irrepressible Howie Sykes and Jon Cox in the front row.

Oli Uffold and Dan Mara made up the 2nd row and were instrumental in the good ball that we got particularly in the first 10 minutes where we took an early lead with a great score from Greg Powell who broke through the first line of defense and just managed to get the ball down on the line.

Lawson Thomas made his first start and was excellent at scrum-half with some good decision making and incisive darts around the ruck area.

Both Sheppard boys were now playing in the pack and eldest brother Rupert showed his power with the ‘hit’ of the tour. Picking up an opposing runner at full pace and driving him back before dumping him into the pitch. This really got us going and we were unlucky not to score again when Tom Crawley and Pat Taylor combined brilliantly out wide. Pat was the find of the tour with some superb breaks and a reading of the game that was way beyond his years. The 4th form members of the tour were superb throughout the trip and didn’t look out of place at all during the games. Ben Chamberlain has improved significantly since joining the school two years ago and this increased maturity was emphasized as he threw well into the lineout and worked very hard in the loose!

Cameron Howie scored another good try after some good work from Uffold and Nash, the try was converted then by Nash. Frustratingly the first half ended with some sloppy play and in consequence we never really got into top gear. The scores just didn’t come for us and so the Spanish side was always in the contention and we just couldn’t kill it off.

In the second half we controlled the ball much better and after a fine break from Harvey Miller and great support from the on-form Fraser Ogden, Dan Mara scored again in the far left corner for a lead of 17-0.

Our defense was excellent and rarely allowed Ordizia to break our line. The midfield with Fraser and Andy just didn’t let anyone through. The tackling was outstanding although we gave away too many penalties through silly errors.

Crawley at full back was having another good game and was a constant threat with ball in hand; the backs were continuing to threaten but the last pass was never quite coming off. Simon Calverley who hadn't played much rugby last year was proving his worth with an excellent work rate and some good tackling.

The final score was from Captain Andy Nash. He got a good short ball from Fraser after some excellent work from the forwards and powered through the Ordizia defence and over the line for a fitting end to the season for a good 1st XV captain.

Ordizia did finally manage to get over the line after some really good work from their forwards and a good finish out wide.

The post-match entertainment was again excellent but, sadly, no duck heart! Andy Nash was certainly relieved and he did check because you can never be too sure!

The next day was our 'Surfing' excursion and the weather was certainly not warm, it was only just above freezing and my motivation was wavering slightly. I decided that we simply had to do it and it wouldn't be that bad!

It was actually a superb afternoon and thoroughly enjoyable. The temperature was much better than anticipated and the sun was out. Cam Howie was a natural and got up on the board straight away! There were certain, nameless, sixth formers who simply whimped out just too cold for these *big* lads!

Lawson Thomas was certainly the most amusing surfer and I shall only say that when he lost his contact lens not only could he not get on to the board but he couldn't even see it! Whilst there were others who came close it was Lawson who was the clear winner of the *Surfing award for effort*.

Ben Chamberlain was, not surprisingly, taking to this like a duck to water and was able to get up on a regular basis, even Howie Sykes managed to get up successfully.

The surfing was great fun and a fantastic way to see Biarritz and try a new sport in a different country.

Our last day was scheduled to be with Richard Poole-Jones the ex-Biarritz and England International. Unfortunately though he was called away to Paris on business and couldn't meet us.

Instead we went to look around Biarritz rugby club and the stadium. We also picked up a few souvenirs. The afternoon couldn't have gone any better! As we arrived I saw that a gate was open around the training ground and so we walked in and pretended that we should be there. Luckily Biarritz 1st XV were training, they don't have a salary cap in France and so many teams have a star-studded line up. Biarritz is no exception and is probably one of the strongest clubs in Europe. All the stars were there training and it

wasn't long before we picked them out whilst they were playing a conditioned game of touch!

When they had finished we raced over and tried to meet them but they were straight into lunch! Luckily I waited around whilst the boys got some souvenirs and dragged the players over for photos as they were attempting to sneak into the changing rooms.

We were fortunate to meet Iain Balshaw, Magnus Lund (England), Damien Traille, Jerome Thion Imanol Harinordoquy Imanol Harinordoquy Imanol Harinordoquy, (France) and possibly my favourite in Imanol Harinordoquy the French Captain. They were great sports and allowed us to have our photograph taken with them. This was unfortunately our last morning in Biarritz and, for another year, Bedstone's 1st XV touring had come to an end!

Look forward to another successful and enjoyable tour next year, team!