

15th August 1007

By This Correspondent

Finally, after three years' training, the tour has started and the Great Britain team for the Palma Match and 2007 World Championships is in Canada. And not without mishap, although the journey itself was relatively plain sailing.

First mishap of the tour goes to David Armstrong, whose white team shirts clearly encountered some of his red underwear in the wash and were pink even before departure. Allied with his trim frame and buzzsaw haircut, you can imagine the impression of the Brits he'll make on the Aussies and Canucks.

Things were looking up, though, almost immediately on getting through security at a surprisingly Swampy-free Heathrow, when Kallie the Bacardi promo girl plied half the team with excellent mojitos - at 11am UK time (6am in Canada) - only to be rewarded by the Mount Gay boys' reversion to buy their traditional tippie instead.

At the same time, the more 'sophisticated' combination of Reg Roberts (Aussie), Anton Aspin (Armourer), Andy Luckman (Vice), Dave Dyson (Fireman) and Gaz Morris (Taff) could be found at the seafood bar in the departure lounge drinking Bolly, dah-ling. Aside from the apparently excellent food, the highlight was undoubtedly watching one of the group chat up a Canadian ex-pat on her way to visit family in Ottawa with some reasonable success. "I was just being polite", he protested.

In the air, again things were simpler, although the Air Canada staff were no less surly than last year. Perhaps they thought we were all as mentally capable as our good team doctor, who was heard asking if we were "over Alaska".

Arrival was smooth - very smooth. James did a smooth job persuading the local authorities not to examine any of the 44 rifles he was importing for us (the South Africans had travelled on the same flight and were not so fortunate), while Matt settled into Canadian life by enjoying 'stimulating' and smooth conversation with the very same blonde who had laughed when a ceiling leak at Boots Heathrow had rained in his eye.

That was nothing though - skipper Martin, who'd arrived earlier, had already 'shared a bed' (her words) with Doreen (standards, guys, PLEASE!), who then spent the rest of the evening doodling his name in a notebook. STALKER! For those reading at home, don't worry - she had vacated her room for our management to take it.

Worried man of the day must be Toby, after seeing the sign outside the hotel on arrival: "Welcome to the GB Palma Team... and Toby." Hope that's nothing to do with his selection prospects...

There'll be shooting tomorrow - honest!