

THURSDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> April – moon mystery and a Grand record, by That (& This)  
Correspondent

After the now all too familiar 5.45am breakfast routine (featuring a rather grumpy looking Malie, clearly not happy with her early rising to prepare our food), we headed out to the range. The day began with the Jack Mitchley at 300m. The wind was blowing a slow left to right and so it was high vee 50 territory for sure, indeed That Correspondent cut a bull 5 sighter in favour of a higher vee count. It was Jane, though, who capitalised on the conditions from the first detail with a 50.10, though Nigel was close by with a 50.9.

Given the team is keen not to return to the UK with tons of brass, Ed Compton arranged a 'case counting party' between ranges to sort them for sale. Fortunately diary writing is a valid enough activity to get out of such a laborious task.

In two consecutive shoots at 600m, a light fishtailing wind caught a few out but mostly saw good 49s and 50s, with the exception of This Correspondent who identified three possible causes for his 45 at the former. Having eliminated two by cleaning his rifle and then going clean at the next range, meaning the culprit couldn't have been the growing split in his pistol grip, he had to acknowledge that it had, after all, been all down to his desperate need to go to the loo during the shoot – one's muscles are supposed to be relaxed while shooting... and that would have been more disastrous...

The team retired to the range shelters for the lunch break. As scores came in, Parag and Nigel had both achieved strong 150s with a couple of lower vee scores following them up. Also in the lunch time banter it was suggested that rowing lakes could be used as rifle ranges as a better use of otherwise very attractive man made water. A certain coach who rows was dismayed to hear that coxed fours might be used as targets in tie shoots and suggested that bobbing targets would provide too many excuses for the sort of shooters who always have a good reason for inners.

Separately, we heard that one of the Under 19s had unfortunately been admitted to hospital and was on a drip after becoming dehydrated the previous day. This is testament to the intense heat and dryness we are all shooting in and quite how unaccustomed the Brits are to it. While That Correspondent has been through the education system fairly recently, This Correspondent confirms that he would have had little idea how to rehydrate or shelter properly at her age.

Those on the first detail tried to follow the captain's earlier suggestion that every opportunity ought to be taken to rest, by grabbing 40 winks in the shelters once they had finished the pre-lunch shoots, but it was all too brief. Steven briefed us during the break on the evening to come and informed us that the team for tomorrow's Protea Match would be announced at the SABU dinner after shooting. Given three shooters must be dropped from the team, the handful close to the cut were under heavy pressure to perform in the last two long range shoots during the afternoon.

The man that ought to have been under most pressure, though, ought to have been Parag Patel in the Col. R Bodley shoot at 900m at the end of the day – he was leading the Grand Aggregate . As he got down with a few of his friends/team-mates watching, he thought all his birthdays had come at once, as he was squadded in a pair rather than a trio, with his partner being a very competent and not a slow shot; moreover, in contrast with the first detail's wind bracket of 0.5 to 5.5 right, the second detail was on a steady 0.5 to 1 (perhaps 1.5) minutes. Parag made the most of it: although there were oohs and aahs from the spectators as his eighth and ninth shots went high (into the cooking bull), he shot brilliantly for a 50.8 and a win in the Grand. Celebration would have to wait until after the Protea Match the next day though...

After a rare couple of hours off, the team met to go to the SABU function at which the various teams for the following day would be announced. Before departure, the team was informed of the outcome of the selection process for the Protea Match for which we had all been preparing:

Captain – Steven Thomas

Main Coach – Martin Townsend

Adjutant – Gary Alexander

Left Target, coached by Matt Charlton – Adam McCullough, Ed Compton, James Lewis, Chris Watson

Middle Target, coached by Jane Messer – Nigel Ball, Rick Shouler, David Dyson, Jon Underwood

Right Target, coached by Matt Ensor – Paul Sykes, Parag Patel, George Gilpin, Toby Raincock

Reserves: Edward Jeens, Marcus O'Leary, Ian Davison

At the function, Steven displayed some of the wit from his repertoire by opening (because the microphone was a bit low) with "Can you hear me? The last person I asked that question replied that he could, but he didn't mind swapping with someone who couldn't", and concluding by offering Deon Burger an alcoholic bribe to ensure his speech at prize giving would be short, much to the amusement of all the locals present. Into battle tomorrow...