

## EUROPEAN CLUB CHAMPIONS CUP BILTHOVEN, HOLLAND, 2016



**DAY 1** of Canterbury Ladies 1st XIV trip to the Euro Club Championships saw us camped out at Polo Farm waiting for our transport.

The Barnes Family kept us entertained with some cute family antics, Archie sitting cross legged in the car park to read before school. It was tear jerking to see his distress at losing his mum for a week, this, however, was immediately eased as he moved on to contemplate the best way to squash a snail...

With the bus finally arriving and all was stowed away, including kit, sticks, 24 boxes !! a bike an esky, we were off.

The tone of the weekend was set when someone got chocolate on their white jumper and Kerla felt a little under the weather and Becca asking whether we were travelling by bus or boat..... Luckily, her parents were a little more on the ball, arranging for a Canterbury shout out on Radio Two,



Passing rolling fields, the squad began to think of the task ahead, but that didn't last long as chat became more

highbrow and would we be able to play volleyball on the train especially as someone had remembered to bring a ball, last year the Satsuma didn't last too long! First drama, we missed our crossing as our driver took the long way round to Folkestone!

The Drama Llama appeared towards the end of our journey as the bus developed a leak and we had to stop to take on water. A lady behind stopped and asked if we could change her wheel as she had a puncture, we declined on the grounds we didn't know how. We eventually made it to S.C.H.C for our training session, although after the warm up it was time to cool down and head inside for our stick checks. The Drama Llama followed Becca this time, as she was told her right glove was too big (the same glove as used last year). We finally made it to the hotel where the supporters availed themselves of the excellent beverages on offer.

**DAY 2** began with some stretching on the grass, KKKerler in the child's pose and Gracey starting her warm up early. This was game day (or evening) with pushback at 8pm, once again vs the host team and Dutch reigning European champions.....seriously. We all decided that the European stage was just the place to conserve energy, not show any attacking flair or reveal any tactics and the plan worked, we bored everyone senseless and lost 6-0, to the bottom half of the draw we went.

**DAY 3** The results of the previous day meant a rest day for us with no unnecessary activity allowed, except for some compulsory fun, branded 'team shenanigans' which turned out to be aerobics in the hotel pool. Dirkie came to life with a colourful routine, making no allowances for the water but thoroughly entertaining us all with her squats, drops, rolls and fancy feet.



Caroline and Mel celebrated their birthdays in style, they attended the team dinner looking like David Walliams and Nora Batty although no one

knew which was which.



**DAY 4** and we were hoping for the luck of the Irish as we reverted back to playing like Canterbury can. A much more seamless GK substitution led to Becca taking her less tangled shoulders on to the pitch to preserve her clean sheet European record. Clevlov's moans about not being allowed to score were deemed irrelevant as she struck firmly into the bottom corner and Dirkie completed an unfamiliar stick between her legs finish, 3-0!!

In a good mood we returned to the quaint Italian Courtyard Restaurant we found last year. Although they had an extensive Italian menu the bulk order was for either ribs or salmon. An early night followed to ensure we were ready for our final game against Surbiton.

**DAY 5** and the play off for 5/6<sup>th</sup> place and probably the most expensive match ever vs Surbiton beckoned. With a slight downpour at the start of the match we all wished we were huddled under a Canadian Sycamore as Peter (our No. 1 Fan) summed it up nicely, "so great to see Melly from the Telly beat Herby from Surby". It was a tight match from the start but the girls looked confident and played with great flair. With Line opening the scoring with a finely taken volleyed shot. Plaudits have to also go to our Coach Wilson with a fine unintentional finish





from Anna pass and another deflected goal into the roof, Surbiton picked up a few green cards and a couple of yellows but our girls kept their heads and ran out 3 – 2 winners.

Heading back to the pitch we arrive for the final Den Bosch vs SCHC, the former winning on shuffles. During the interesting commentary Canterbury were mentioned as the prettiest team of the tournament,

Grace collected the trophy for the fair play award, we only picked up 1 green card during the whole tournament, way less than anyone else.



The trip home was a very quiet affair with most of the girls sleeping until Calais. We arrived back to Polo after what seemed like the longest season ever, only for one bright spark to throw in a comment well its only 6 weeks now to pre-season training. Thanks to the small team of supporters who managed to make a great deal of supporting noise and thanks to Blackbird Caterers who kindly sponsored the team hoodies.

