

Petersham RFU EOS Tour 2009 – Phuket

Written by Judanachos.

This year's End of season trip was a combined tour, reunion and stag do (that's like a bucks night only older and with bigger antlers). It was the tourists' honour to help celebrate Adrian 'Donsy' Donohue's final few moments as a single man. Additionally, several ex-players, including an ex-president, swelled the ranks of a refined group of Shammie Ambassadors. The seniority of the group is perhaps demonstrated by the fact that the youngest, Steven 'Biggy' Biggs is 24 years old.

As is tradition Biggy was presented with Socko (literally a sock). Tradition states that he must wear Socko 24 hours a day during the tour on his arm. His commitment to his charge was such that he wore it during the tour match in the 35-degree heat and 400% humidity. No lineout ball was lost when socko was the target.

The excitement of the tour was palpable at the beginning and thus it was that a young Phil 'Linus' Minett disobeyed a team call and shot through customs instead of adjourning to the bar for the first tour meeting. His offence was further compounded by dragging an impressionable James 'Smokey' Forde along with him. This incident was considered enough of a transgression for Linus to be awarded the minding duties of Sir Alfred, the tour mascot. The mascot must be kept with the minder at all times. One would think that a furry little wombat would not be much of a handful. Somehow this proved not to be the case. More later.

The opening tour meeting was notable for the fact that it was not remembered very well by the person assigned to document the tour. At this point he decided that a notebook was in order. Events that could have occurred might have been an imparting of the secret ways of the Shammie tourist passed on for over 125 years, maybe a clandestine handshake was introduced to the tour virgins, quite possibly a divvying up of a rather hefty tour fund was carried out. It's not for me to say even though I have been requested to by the president. One event that did stand out was Biggy's question, "What is a Kangaroo court?" Hmmm. Brave question Biggy. For the record the tour virgins were: Matt Gooch, Andy Harris, James Forde, Eamon Croucher, Fetalai Taua'aletoa, Steve Bigg, Matt Duffy, Alan Donohue and Kent Prusas.

The flight over was pleasant enough with Jetstar proving to be a surprisingly comfortable carrier. Notably the boys were giving a special welcome aboard by the pilot. This encouraged the Shammies to quietly, and without disturbing any other passengers, drink the plane dry of VB. Several cans of 'apparently not quite VB standard' Heineken were imbibed by a few unfortunate souls near journey's end. **Much to the credit of the lads the hostesses and 'Adam' the perfectly groomed steward gave us pat on the back for our commendable behaviour**, especially Harry 'Hairy' Potter who quietly read his book like a good lad.

Customs proved to be no problem although it is rumoured that Adam 'Dunny' Dunn may have lost an entire gear bag full of hair and beauty products. This did not detract from his ability to be immaculately turned out at all times during the remainder of the tour. Matt 'Turtleduff' Duff attempted to draw security by exploding his chip packet in the terminal like a bomb but it seems that potato snack related attacks are relatively low on the radar.

The Baan Sukhothai hotel warmly welcomed us with glasses of punch and a large Shammies banner. The boys checked in finding out who their room mates would be in the process. There was much disappointment when Dan Moore (a team favourite) proved to have his own room. Room mates were as follows:

Room Mates

Matt 'Hoochy Coochy' Gooch
Lucas 'Loosey Loo' Cordingley

Room Ambiance

The naked sleepers (I wish I didn't know this)

Andy 'Mata Hari' Harris
James 'Step' Forde 'Wives' the 3rd

Vomitorium – James spent much of his time with his head in the bowl while Andy gently held his hair

Phil 'Monty Burns' Minnett Dave 'Dicky' Kelly	The Stock exchange. Why buy one cabana sweeping tool when you can buy two?
Adam 'Dances with Poles' Dunn Greg 'Mariah' Headley	The Timmy Knockers (7am wake-up call anyone? And a possible insinuation that Timmy, so long from rugby, now has breasts)
Nick 'Knickers' Hearfield Eamon 'Ze Zebra Gabore' Croucher	Chernobyl Think Tank - ground zero for philosophical thought.
Fetalai 'Princess Lea' Taua'aletoa	Podiatry – If he's not in he's out buying shoes or getting a foot massage while drinking a coconut
Steve 'Bootilicious' Bigg Matt 'Chopper' Duffy	The Young and the Restless – practically a wombat free zone (Socko and Sir Alfred may have had a falling out)
Kent 'Judanachous' Prusas	The fortress of solitude. Just a man and his notebook (waterproof)
Adrian 'Debbie' Donoghue	The Rebel Alliance i.e. another hotel entirely
Alan 'Daisy' Donoghue Campbell 'The Rhinestone' Headley	The Tacticians Library – Sun Tzu had nothing on Cowboy. He hatched his schemes while Harry retreated to a world of fantasy.
Dan 'Admiral Tarkin' Moore	The Death Star – He controls the fate of millions in this fully armed and operational (with room service) hotel room. Also does a creditable Renton (from Trainspotting) impression.
Jimmy 'Sevens' Melrose	Twilight – (never seen during daylight hours, and he sparkles in the full light of the sun)
David 'Sir Ursula Andress' Thorpe	Hand Towel Headgear Heaven

Note: The above nicknames are further explored in the Tour Pen Portraits to be released on the website.
Warning: Nicknames may change during this document

Swiftly we went into town, which was pretty much outside the door as we were staying right in the centre of things on Bangla Road. Walking down the road proved to be an eye-opening experience with many a hawker and night club to entice the unwary and uninitiated. Just as more than one straggler was beginning to wonder at which particular bar we were supposed to meet, the bar staff of the U2 bar appeared all decked out in Shammies tour kit. That'll be us then. Like our own version of The Alfred in the Orient, this was our base of operations for the next 6 days. Waiting for us at the bar were Jimmy, Uncle Dan and David Thorpe, Jimmy's long lost Maori twin. Thorpy spent the entire time impersonating a towel rail as he was never seen without a soaked hand towel on his head. I'm pretty sure if he removed it he would have drowned.

Much hilarity and hijinx ensued while at all times upholding the Petersham touring ethics and standards.

What is the best way to face the first full day of a tour? Well according to Eamon it is to arise bright and fresh at 7:30am, take a walk to acclimatise and perhaps get welcomed to the new country by being hugged by a group of affectionate children. This is the initial story. After much questioning, cajoling, good cop, bad cop, hung-over cop and just basically staying silent for a couple of seconds causing Eamon to fill the silence with a new version of his story, it was discovered that the 'children' were in fact lady-boys and being 'hugged' was actually 'having your wallet stolen'. Poor Eamon. Those brazen multi-sexual hussies then proceeded to taunt and threaten him, trying to extort 1000 Baht (~\$30)

from our brave Shammie for the return of his property. After a bit of prompt action, whereby all members of the touring party were informed of the story and had a sneaky laugh at Eamon's misfortune (such shallow cads) the police were called and Eamon duly paid the cash and received his wallet along with the contents of several other wallets including a large Englishman named Dominique (who had somehow fallen into his own wallet while it was being nicked).

From his point on Eamon was very wary of 'children' and also children (having become a little confused about his own story at this point). Anyone seen in the vicinity of a youngling was quite loudly decried as a deviant. Some of these ne'er-do-wells travelled in mixed groups containing both a male and a female adult accompanied by up to 3 offspring brazenly mimicking exactly a family unit. This disgusting behaviour found no favour with our Eamon until of course some other sparkly trifle distracted him.

And so day 2 continued and by 7:45pm Harry appeared briefly to inform us that he was up to page 314. He vocally adjudged some such item to be substandard and retired to continue his love affair with literature (if you can call the never ending drivel that Robert Jordan writes literature).

The evening kick-started at the U2 bar where we continued to receive stellar service in the form of Changi or Tiger beers hand delivered in individual beer coolers that Dunny was not actually selling (to my knowledge). From there the boys reverted to type and went to look for a bar that contained something of a slightly more exotic flavour. And it was Lucas who led us. Our brave club captain successfully discovered, down a side alley, a bar where we could play Jenga, challenge locals and tourists alike to hit nails into a piece of wood or just jump on the drums or the microphone and give the vocal chords or the drum-kit a good thrashing. By crikey those hospitable Thais were glad to see and hear the last of us (except for Timmy and Nacho who were awesome!).

The inevitable court sessions were held to punish and exaggerate the smallest and most hilarious of infractions in the name of increasing the beer kitty. The first was held in the hotel pool at 10:30am on the 30th October. At this point the purchase of a water-proof notebook to record tour events came into it's own. Harry discovered that his book was not waterproof. Now I won't bore you with the minutiae of who lost their wallet or slept in the hall or who didn't know that the pirate girls were a lady boy act even though it is clearly stated on the flyer (2 whole floors it says!). These are just not funny. However, one of the biggest transgressions of the tour was committed by Turtle Duff and cannot go unmentioned. Having been given the responsibility for Sir Alfred (for his 'love' of all things animal) he proceeded to not remain at all sober, which undermined his ability to appropriately escort this club dignitary. Various young ladies were drawn to the cuteness of Sir A keeping Turtle D on his toes for much of the evening. By the end of the night this had taken its toll as he was found asleep clutching a terrified wombat at the back of the bar. A Good Samaritan helped him back to his hotel room and considered this to be the end of the matter. However, the next morning Duffy appeared looking shaken and without his favourite marsupial. Ignoring the role call for the court session he was off into town to retrace his steps and hopefully find our brave Sir Alfred who was now considered to be missing in action. Upon his return, alone, having missed half of the court sitting (and fined in absentia), he proceeded to apologise and was nearly in tears as he felt the full force of guilt at having let down his teammates by losing our beloved mascot. It was at this point that the full details of the previous night were brought to the court's attention. It seems that after being left alone outside his door Turtle Duff had unlocked the door, opened the door, walked inside, closed the door and went to sleep having dropped Sir Alfred a mere 27cms from safety. Luckily, through the actions of the vigilant and the brave, Sir Alfred was saved from a cold and lonely night on the floor in the corridor. After this information was revealed, the president was then requested to submerge himself for the indulgence of the court using the court appointed swimming goggles. Upon surfacing he was hysterical with mirth. As the goggles were passed around each tourist ducked down then up with the same result. When the goggles were finally handed to Duffy he descended underwater to reveal our poor Sir Alfred tied to a brick suspended 8 feet under the surface (Soprano style). He'd been within arms reach for the entire time, but was now 'sleeping with the fishes'

On Friday 30st Oct was the game against Vagabonds. An hour's travel by a convoy of tuk-tuks conveyed the team to the British International School in the middle of the island. On a pitch that was at least 125m long with the posts a further metre behind the try line the Shammies girded their loins and prepared to face a team of lads in their late teens mixed with a few of the senior vagabonds members. To assist the touring team a mysterious Mexican wrestler positioned himself at fullback for kick-off.

Clad in a stunning sky-blue and red combination, including cape, he proceeded to stuff up a promising attacking move my falling on his arse. That was the last we saw of this embarrassing figure.

While this was a tour match it must be noted that James Forde, who was making his come-back after a long break due to knee surgery, was the keenest of the tourists to take the field. It was therefore with great tragedy that he was struck down on that very knee and had to leave the field after only a few minutes. The hearts of the Shammies went out to their teammate knowing how much this game meant to him. James' spirits soon recovered if not his knee and he happily hobbled around for the remainder of the tour. The game itself was played in good spirit and despite the heat and hangovers Petersham had the upper hand from the outset. By half time it was 27-0. The stand-outs in the forwards were Andy 'Tulip' Harris and Fetalai 'Fitzy' Taua'aletoa who made several busting runs and were ever present in support play. In the backs Greg 'Timmy' Headley was a workhorse, taking the ball through the opposition backline on many an occasion. Perhaps the most surprising but also rather predictable was the appearance of Alan 'Harry Potter' Donoghue on the wing. His 50-meter (at bloody least) sprint for a try was reminiscent of any of Jonah Lomu's storming runs. Three pages were read during his dash for the line.

The opposition were strong tacklers and were never shy of the close contact despite being undersized across the field. Through tenacity and perseverance the home team managed 3 tries, the last of which was on the final whistle. The game is reported to have ended at 42-17 although this cannot be confirmed as everyone was pretty buggered and just wanted a cool shower.

It must also be noted that the number of injuries did mount during the game and while unlimited interchange was available some players spent the entire game on the field. Those who stayed on the field and those who did not, know who they are. Most notable for his full game was Bigsy who was a towering force in the forwards. Fitzy was awarded man of the match by the Vagabonds even though he didn't win the sculling race (although he didn't get last). To everyone's great disappointment, tour & club captain Lucas Cordingley didn't get to take the field due to a knee injury sustained in the Masters Bronze medal game. A great loss for many reason not least of which he was primarily responsible for the 'best ever' kit and some very special boots that will now be cocooned until next season.

The vagabonds generously shouted us at the OZ bar, also providing t-shirts and a feed. It was here that the dormant recalcitrance of Donsy erupted as he flat out refused to make the effort to move 4 metres to scull his free beer. The vagabonds kindly introduced the Shammies to a new method of sculling from a bottle involving the complex fluid dynamic qualities of inserting a straw into the top of the bottle. It's far too difficult to explain here so you can either get a scholarship to M.I.T or ask one of the tourists when you buy them a beer next and supply them with a straw.

The following day was the coaching session at the University. While 11 am seemed a tall order at the time, all Shammies made the effort to attend. About 30 children ranging from 6 to 16 including both Thai and ex-pats were keen to gain some Petersham rugby knowledge. Head Coach Timmy took charge ably assisted by Dunny. The kids were put through various offloading, passing and tackling drills. Their skill levels were varied but on a par with any group of children relatively new to the game as they were. Some of the older kids did have some exceptional skills and speed, which on more than one occasion in the final touch game put a few Shammies to shame. To record our charitable act, a local television crew was present. Dunny took the responsibility of being the face of Petersham and conducted himself superbly as usual, furthering the good Shammie name into Asia. Before this could happen a tuk-tuk had to be converted into a dressing room complete with Jacuzzi and green M&Ms for our star front man. Harry added a scholarly air to the proceedings by reading in the background. Page 546 I believe.

After the final court session, in which nothing of note occurred to the tune of 13,000 Baht the Dan Moore Touring trophy was awarded to the Tourist of the Tour. This year it went to Kent 'Nacho' Prusas for caped exploits on the field and notepad related activities off. Most of the credit must in fact go to the notepad and its companion, the amazing floating pencil.

The highlight (or lowlight) of the Saturday night was perhaps the Beldisloe cup test or perhaps it wasn't. The jury appeared out on this. To take the sting out of an unpleasant evening, Lucas was witnessed cracking onto a local. Tired and lying on the footpath a homeless dog found itself on the receiving end of an offer to take a break from homelessness for one dreamy night with Lucas 'the dog

whisperer'. Sometimes the price of improvement is just too high. Sometimes the effort to work out how this could be an improvement for the dog is just too much. He even tried to sweeten the deal by suggesting a playful threesome. I'm sure he was most likely motioning to a Thai girl to provide him with a frisbee or perhaps a rubber bone to entice the canine. Yes I'm sure it was all above board.

On the Sunday a much-needed day trip to the Phi Phi islands was organised. Tragedy once again struck Smokey as he had to contend with a rather bumpy 1-hour speedboat ride to our destination while suffering the effects of 'food' poisoning. He managed to fill several plastic bags with his stomach contents and calmly eject them over the side whilst under the amused scrutiny of the 60 people on the boat. No one was expecting dinner and a show but Smokey provided it. A relaxing day was had even though a shark was spotted during a spot of snorkelling. All agreed that the islands around Phuket are truly beautiful, the people wonderful and the water is NOT fit for drinking (Eamon. Eamon! Spit it out!), as we returned to the bars of Bangla Road.

The final night never seemed to end especially for those who stayed out all night. The U2 bar played host once again and Petersham repaid the kind service by proceeding to run up a mammoth bar tab. A Petersham T-shirt was presented to the bar and it was nailed to the ceiling taking pride of place amongst a plethora of other memorabilia. The Petersham name was also inscribed on the owner's bell which is rung every time someone shouts the bar staff.

The trip home was unsurprisingly subdued. Not even the snoring of certain tourists or the losing of wallets (as an exciting passage was being read on page 879) could detract from the pleasant thoughts of returning home to loved ones. On a serious note, it was pointed out by Lucas 'Cactus' Cordingley that, for security reasons, it might not be prudent to have both the club captain and the president on the same flight. It is envisaged that funds will be set aside to purchase a twin set of aircraft before the next tour to avoid catastrophe.

Special thanks to Lucas Cordingley for organising the entire trip. It all went off without any major problems and all returned safely home.

On returning home:

Lucas retired from rugby and became a veterinarian. He lives with 2 loving dogs. They are expecting puppies

Thorpy received a bill from the hotel equivalent to exactly 37 hand towels.

Bigsy and Socko had a falling out and Bigsy is now under an AVO

Smokey returned to the beaches of Thailand to look for his lost lunch but he never found it.

Dan Moore initiated legal proceedings to sue Linus for stealing his nickname 'Monty Burns'

Matt Duffy joined the search and rescue squad. To this day no wombats have drowned on his watch.

Donsy is now returning for his 3rd stint at Recalcitrants Anonymous in the Russell Crowe clinic.

Sir Alfred had gills genetically grafted and is now a world class synchronised swimmer.

Harry finished his book.