

ABs in Jersey



September 2021

Thursday 2 September

All over England, hockey players were scratching their heads wondering where they'd put their ointments and embrocation whilst packing their kit for the long-delayed ABs Jersey tour. Meanwhile, sent forth as an emissary to make straight the paths and prepare the way for their advent to the Channel Islands, strode **Julia**, establishing base camp at the Grand Hotel and ensuring all was ready for the Great Arrival....

Friday 3 September

The sun shone, the birds sang, the beach beckoned. In twos and threes, by plane and by boat, the ABs ventured to Jersey and wended their way to St Helier. With orifices tingling (unusual thus early in a tour) notes were swapped about the relative abrasiveness of the PCR tests applied on entry. For most of us this was our first post-Covid venture overseas, and it was just brilliant to be meeting and mixing with old friends and new once again.

The terrace at The Grand provided a superb venue for that first tour drink and to watch the world go by. It wasn't long before a large party headed for the beach and a swim, the tide having conveniently brought the sea up to the promenade. Here we discovered for the first time the unexpected prevalence of Portuguese as

the second language of Jersey. Apparently, a deal between Jersey and Madeira has led to the establishment of a population of over 20,000 of Cristiano Ronaldo's pals on the island – indeed an Interesting Fact and not the last we would come across!

With Covid having slashed the availability of eateries it was a tough job finding somewhere to accommodate us all for dinner, but the resourceful ABs jollied their way into the cosy Italian just round the corner from the hotel. Refreshed and viltled they staggered back to their beds as elite athletes do, to ensure top form for the morrow...

Saturday 4 September

Another beautiful morning saw **Mike** join the **Taigs** for a pre-breakfast dip in the sea. **Lynne** considered it for about a microsecond before deciding that a lie-in and leisurely shower might be preferable. With plenty of time to spare in the morning, breakfast was a leisurely affair in the vastness of The Grand's dining room. Great excitement on venturing into town – a sale at Mountain Warehouse! A local busking/singing group performing live on the street! Weird local banknotes emitted from the cash machines!

With so much going on there was plenty to talk about on the bus to the pitch. Not least spotting the invalids and wheelchairs overtaking the bus as the ABs discovered another Interesting Fact – the weekend speed of traffic along the St Helier Esplanade is lower than that on any major street in London (actually I made that one up – but it really was a crawl!)

Eventually we arrived at the pitch where all were mightily impressed by the new clubhouse built over the stand – and the excellent changing facilities underneath it. Here we were welcomed by **Tim & June** and various old friends from Jersey, who had gone to great lengths to assemble an appropriately-aged team from all quarters of the Channel Islands. Being a bit thin on playing numbers a deal had been arranged to loan us a player and this was where we met the wonderful **Conrad**, who fitted into the ABs as snugly as you like.

Q1

Paul Sharratt scored after receiving a great pass on the right, broke past a defender and put the ball in from a tight angle. Great start.

Game was being played at a reasonable pace with ABs on top. **Conrad Evans** (our Guest player) was moved into midfield as he gave us extra legs. **Mike Verity** just passed to the umpire? **Robin Conway** intercepted a lifted pass on the left and started another attack from the back. **Peter Reid** introduced the ball into the circle, which

was turned into a penalty corner, but ABs failed to convert. **Paul Bateson** kept putting in great reverse stick passes keeping Jersey under pressure. However, ABs were unable to create anything against a stout Jersey defence. Jersey then built an attack from the back which resulted in a good pass into the circle, but the attacker failed to convert. End of the first quarter and ABs lead 1 – 0.

Q2

Gold medallist **Mike Christie** started with a mazy run to nowhere. It looked good and the crowd were impressed. Hard pass into the circle by **Paul Bateson** just missed by **Richard Turner**. Excellent passing move down the right wing broken down by Jersey who countered to pierce our defence and score a fine goal, beating **Richard Boucher** who had little chance. Jersey 1 – 1 ABs.

Short corner to Jersey, **Allan Sutton** spectacular tackle, missed pass by Jersey goes harmlessly past the post. Lovely move between **Mike Christie, Paul Bateson and Pete Reid** resulted in a shot just past the post. Great interception by **Mukesh Phakey** puts in **Paul Bateson**, hard shot just wide. As ABs maintained the pressure, **Paul Bateson** winds up for another shot just comes off a defender for a long corner. Steaming hot conditions ABs sweating like thoroughbreds. **Sharratt's** knee brace squeaking and clanking, fabulous tackle by **German Singh** clears the D. **Sharratt** asking the umpire where he plays, while whingeing about an absolutely correct decision. ABs keeping up the pressure, **Paramjit** plays a great ball into the D, just out of reach of **John Peirce**. End of the 2nd Quarter; 1 – 1.

Q3

Skipper Sharratt puts 4 or 5 players at the top of the diamond?? No, we couldn't work it out either. So the team just ignored him and did their own thing.

Jersey started with some effective passing out from the back. Great ball across the D by **Mike Verity**, good chance narrowly missed by **John Peirce**. Jersey attack breaks down and **German** plays a great ball out to **Paul Bateson** who moves it quickly to **Mike Verity** with a simple pass to **John Pearce** who couldn't and didn't miss. "GOAL" Jersey 1 - 2 ABs.

Short corner to Jersey passed well around the D but then lifted into **Mukesh**. Another short to Jersey well intercepted and ABs counter which was repulsed just before the opposition D. **Mike Christie** good pass out to **Mike Verity** onto **Paul Bateson** who shot well wide of the right post. Excellent persistence by **Tony Taig** results in a free hit high up the pitch. Whistle goes for end of Q3. Jersey 1 – 2 ABs.

Q4

Richard Turner leads attack down the right to **Paul Bateson** crossed into the D but ABs fail to finish. Jersey then attack ball into the middle intercepted by **Mick Christie** who stumbles, then recovers with a great ball to **Paramjit** who attacks down the left, who should have passed to **Mike Verity** but decided to go for glory, only for his shot to just miss the left post. AB short corner, injector out to **Robin Conway**, whose shot was saved but picked up by **Pete Reid** who fires it into the D and up pops **Mike Verity** who connects to steer the ball past a stranded keeper. ABs lead 3 – 1.

Jersey full back decides to go it himself, makes 40yds down the middle but no end result. **Paramjit** does one fancy move too many and play breaks down. **Paramjit** again breaks forward and plays a defence splitting ball through to **Paul Bateson** in the D whose half hit shot scores 4 – 1.

ABs attack again through **Mike Verity**, **Paul Bateson** and **Richard Turner** but no end result. More pressing, **Paul Bateson** shoots, the ball is deflected upwards off a defender's stick, umpire blows against **Paul Bateson**, only the Umpire knows why. No one else can work it out. Big scramble in the ABs D, **Richard Boucher** on the ground wriggles around and manages to save. Very impressive. Jersey does better in their next attack and roof a flick as **Richard** goes down. Jersey 2 – 4 ABs.

End to end stuff in the closing minutes as ABs try to maintain possession and run the clock down. One final push results in a bit of jumble in the Jersey D; **Paramjit** gets the ball to **Paul Bateson** who just scrapes it in. But they all count! Jersey 2 – 5 ABs.

Man of the Match: Mike Verity.



Little needs to be added to the report on the first match, which saw the ABs running out 5-2 winners, except perhaps to mention the **Skipper's** noble, self-sacrificing effort to get 4 yellow cards issued simultaneously to the opposition. The 4 yellows didn't quite work out but the self-sacrifice did – ouch! Fabulous defensive displays from the likes of **Allan**, **Mukesh** and **German** along with spritely running from some of the younger members – not to mention our co-optee **Conrad** who was fit and willing throughout and a tremendous shift from **Robin** in midfield – underpinned the result. Was there a teeny spot of jug evasion from **Richard** (or was it **John**?) as the ball teetered across the opposition

goal line on multiple occasions without receiving that teeny touch that would have made the scoreline even more impressive? Make no mistake – this Channel Islands team were no mugs and gave us a really good game, but with **Richard** (the younger) in goal they were never going to be able to match our scoring tally.

Post-match hospitality in the new clubhouse was superb. Many jugs, gins and glasses of wine later we sat down to a great meal cooked and served by the wonderful Lee family. The bus trip back to the hotel simply flew by (there was a lot less traffic) and **Julia** persuaded the hotel to find us a room to ourselves for our bedtime drinkies. After so much sun, sand, hockey and alcohol there were quite a few early nights, and as I was one of them I am unable to comment on the debauchery and excess which may or may not have ensued among the diehard senior ABs.

Sunday 4th September

Another day dawned bright and sunny – we’re starting to think there’s something to be said for these Channel Islands, though a glance at prices in the estate agents’ windows quickly reminds us that they might be a bit above our pay grade.

Much creaking and wincing at breakfast as the stretching begins – sit down (ouch!), stand up (eek!), sit down again (aargh!) and so forth.

And now the debauchery of last night started to be revealed as the senior diehards started limping in – one after the other **John, Richard and German** crawled out of the woodwork. Their reward for their dedication in exploring the local whisky bars was to find themselves a tad less chipper than the young sprogs who’d stayed in. Could **Brian** become available to make a cameo appearance? Much as he’d have loved to; the sensible answer was “No”.

The traffic wasn’t quite so dense as we bussed it up to Le Quennevais, where we found a substantially younger Jersey team getting ready to play us. With the **skipper’s** shoulder ruling him out, **Clive** had a relatively easy time managing the bench, as there really wasn’t much to manage.

Everyone had to put in pretty much a full shift – and it’s jolly hard work trying to keep up with people 20 years younger than you.

See the match report for full details – but suffice it to say the ABs were not able to replicate their splendid win of the previous day, notwithstanding the fabulous supporters cheering on their every effort and micro-victory.

Q1

The whistle goes and we're off against a much younger side than yesterday. First attack by ABs sees **Tony Taig** receive the ball in the D shoots just left of the post. Jersey counters from the 16 and attack down the left they break dangerously but fail to capitalise after some excellent passing with the shot going high over the goal. Jersey attack again but **Robin** makes a fine tackle to stop the break. ABs awarded a free hit taken by **Paramjit** to **Robin** to **Mike Verity** to **Conrad**. Nice move but no end result.

Jersey attack quickly ending with a fine save by **Richard**. Brisk start to the game, end to end stuff, with both sides playing well. Jersey having the better chances.

ABs working hard find **Conrad** in space runs at the Jersey defence evades three tackles into the D shoots but misses the goal. Good long ball by **Mukesh** finds **Mike Verity** but not able to control the ball and the attack breaks down.

1st short corner to Jersey after ball hits **Paramjit's** foot (NOT). Calls for umpire **Tom Ettl** to be subbed. Thankfully the short comes to nothing. Ball played out to **Mike Verity** then forward to **Conrad** on the right, who makes another good run, passes to **John Peirce** free in the D but **JP** missed his attempt at goal; but gained a short corner following a Jersey infringement. Good short corner routine finished with a "GOAL" to ABs. (who by??, believed to be **Conrad**).

Another controversial judgement against **Paramjit** promising break by ABs prematurely ended. **Umpire losing control** ???

End Q1 Jersey 0 – 1 ABs.

Q2

Jersey straight from the start pressing to get the equaliser, win a long corner – quite a scramble in ABs D but eventually cleared. Jersey short corner; 2 shots both stopped by **Richard** who is once again showing his quality. However, following a poor clearance picked up by Jersey and fired back into the D crossed to an unmarked player who couldn't and didn't miss.

Jersey 1 – 1 ABs.

Game continues with lots of toing and froing but neither side gaining the upper hand. Then a random ball hit into the ABs D brings a good save by **Richard** (again). ABs unable to clear the ball which catches a foot and a short corner awarded. Jersey score a good goal with a pass to the right taking the keeper out of the equation.

Jersey 2 – 1 ABs.

ABs on the defensive, another scramble in the D, but Jersey shot narrowly misses passing the right-hand post. Quick break by ABs led to a pass from the left into the Jersey D but nobody could pick it up chance gone.

End of Q2;

Jersey 2 – 1 ABs.

Q3

Jersey starts with a promising attack eventually intercepted by **Robin** who clears it well down the left wing. Short corner to Jersey seen out past the right post by **Mike Christie** for a long corner.

Mukesh to **Mike Verity** to **Robin Conway** with several passes but no penetration into the Jersey D; eventually broken down by Jersey who go on the attack passing the ball about in the D resulting in an unmarked player on the left of their attack to score.

End of Q3. Jersey 3 – 1 ABs.

Q4

ABs start well but Jersey gain possession and press into the D, good kick from **Richard** to relieve the pressure. Cultured spell of play by Jersey on the right, ball into the D shot by their lady player parried twice by **Richard** and ball eventually cleared by the defence. End to end stuff ABs press into the Jersey D. **Tony Taig** showing good skills and wins a penalty corner. Not able to get a shot off but won another corner.

Again unable to get a strike on goal but **Paramjit** protecting the ball showing his silky skills and Jersey unable to take the ball off him but all to no avail. ABs pressed and maintained a good period of pressure until the Umpire's whistle brought an end to the game. Jersey 3 – 1 ABs.

The Whites had the youth, but the Reds had the skill and the brains. Hard work but a thoroughly enjoyable game.

Man of the Match: Richard Boucher.



Off the pitch though the ABs continued in triumphant mode to ravage the clubhouse stocks of Birra Moretti and the local pale ale. Mr Lee laid on an extravagant hot and cold running buffet which was very well received and to which we did full justice. Urged to patronise the clubhouse cellar we fully entered into the spirit and gamely did our bit to contribute to the funding of the new clubhouse. Let's be honest – that evening was a bit of a blur for your

intrepid correspondent so if anyone waltzed off for a(nother) night of debauchery I'm afraid I've missed it and they are in the clear.

Monday 5th September

Bright and clear dawned the day yet again – what a climate! And for our day of holiday, with no hockey required! After breakfast we trooped down to the harbour and embarked for a really fun and informative boat trip. Interesting Facts flowed thick and fast – Jersey has pretty much the highest tidal range of anywhere in the UK with up to 12 metres between low and high spring tides! (No wonder it was so many miles to trek out to the sea when the tide was out). All but one of the harbour areas are accessible only at high tide, and if you want a berth in La Collette Marina (with round the tide access) you'll have to join a 25-year waiting list and be prepared to shell out serious money, even by Jersey standards.

The South coast of Jersey looked beautiful from the sea, and we marvelled at some of the upmarket properties along the way. Another Interesting Fact – because Jersey slopes gently uphill from South to North it gets that a touch more sun-warmed than Guernsey and so has average temperatures 1-2 degrees higher (well that's what our Jersey guide said anyway). St Brelade's Bay was gorgeous and looked even more so when the bar on the boat started serving beers and G & T.

Who would have thought that we would be clamouring for a chance to jump in the sea? Well, we were and the boat skipper moored us up in a pretty little anchorage whence the AB Water Babies dived in in numbers. Actually, most just climbed or jumped in, but **Richard the Younger** earned high marks from the judges for his bold dive. The **team skipper**, nursing a sore shoulder, nobly stayed behind on the boat to look after everyone's kit while maintaining his analgesic intake.



After the excitement of the boat trip everyone was ready for a quiet afternoon – some to the beach, some into town, quite a few loitering on that lovely terrace at The Grand and watching the world go by. We were girding our loins for the big one that evening – the tour dinner. Down in the bowels of the hotel we were only mildly disappointed (well, relieved in quite a few cases) that the piano was unable to be moved into our reserved room. We ate well. We drank well. We were regaled by mercifully short speeches from the Directors, and AB virgin **Mike Verity** offered a short but heartfelt tribute to the whole concept of the ABs. On a slightly more serious note the **Skipper** and **Chairman** pointed out the need to recruit more younger members if the ABs were to be able to continue – a sobering thought, and one we all need to address as we move forward. All concurred heartily with the vote of particular thanks to **Julia** for all her efforts on our behalf to arrange the tour, the hotel, the on-island transport and the outings.

Tuesday 6th September

Parting is such sweet sorrow. While several were staying on for an extra night or few today was the day that we had to say our farewells and embark on the next steps of our AB journeys. Thanks to everyone for a great tour which will live in my memory for:

- The weather and beach-bumming elements,
- The hockey and clubhouse, but above all
- The chance after Covid to meet again and enjoy each others' company.

Long may we continue!

Paul Sharratt (Capt) Paul Bateson, Richard Boutcher, Mike Christie, Robin Conway, Paramjit Hayre, Mukesh Phakey, John Peirce, Tom Ettlting, Peter Reid, German Singh, Allan Sutton, Tony Taig, Richard Turner, Mike Verity, Conrad Evans (Guest player).

Supporters - Julia Bateson, Diane Boutcher, Lynn Christie, Brian Conway, Karen Daly, Christine Ettlting, Julia Greenhough, Jasbinder Hayre, Neeru Phakey, Glynis Reid, Raghvir Kaur Singh, Jenny Taig, Sandy Verity, Clive Kendall.

Note Takers:

Game 1: Mukesh Phakey, Tom Ettlting, Richard Turner and 1 Other??

Game 2: Mike Christie, Alan Sutton, Richard Turner and Conrad Evans (Guest).

Overall Matches Reporter: Peter Reid.

Pictures; Richard Turner & Tom Ettlting

Tour Editor: Tony Taig

