

Barcelona with LX Over 75s.(Names used for convenience, even though you don't know to whom they refer)

Arrived on June 18th to be greeted by sunshine and heat!! Transferred to the hotel booked by LX, to share a room with a couple of other players. It turned out to be a 2 bed room with an extra bed - and a baby's cot!! Fortunately, the 3 of us managed to spend the 2 weeks without incident...

19th Quick walk round to explore and find some swimming trunks and a lazy day by (and in) the pool. Barrie missing, taken to hospital with swollen legs owing to water retention Found out it was because of a heart problem). Opening ceremony, where we learned that Eric had parked his motor home near the Polo Club, only to be robbed at knife-point and relieved of wallet, passport and wife's jewellery within minutes. The ceremony was not exactly scintillating, either...although we met plenty of friends among the other teams.

20th. Visited Barrie in hospital and then caught a bus to the centre. Hot, so stopped for a drink, walked a few hundred yards and stopped for lunch (3 courses and a bottle of wine for 9 euros) and decide it was too hot, so took the bus back to the pool).

21st Watched various teams sweating on the pitch!

22nd Played Southern Cross. A cool day of only 29 degrees. We managed to miss innumerable scoring chances and finish 3 - 2 down. Never mind, we'll get them in the replay!

23rd. Better, but still managed to miss far too many scoring chances, but beat Alliance 3 - 0.

24th. Visited the Gaudi Church. An incredible experience walking round this unusual, colourful building.

25th. Played the Dutch Cup team. An excellent game against some very skilled players who, deservedly, won 3 - 0. George took a wallop on the knee and John (keeper) hurt an already damaged wrist. Chris tore calf muscles and could hardly move.

26th. Played the Australian Cup team. A hard-fought match in spite of our injured players, but we lost 2 - 0 in the end. Once again, scoring chances went begging.

27th. Alliance again and a repeat of the missed chances saga. Both teams were suffering with injuries and the heat was also taking its toll. We managed another win, 2 - 0.

28th and 29th Rest days. More local exploration and pool visits during which 2 wives had their handbags stolen and Brian had his bag containing camera and cash removed from next to his feet while in a cafe.

30th. Last match. All we had to do was to make the scoring chances count and win by 3 clear goals to earn gold medals. So far, our short corner count was zero from more than 40 attempts. Just one snag. Of the 14 players in the squad, Barrie could not play even though he was no longer in hospital, Chris could barely stand, George could run - just, John had a suspected fractured wrist and 3 players had booked their flights for the 29th and were already back n England. As a result, we had no substitutes and started with, effectively, 9 players. Southern Cross scored twice in the first quarter but it took them until the last 5 minutes to score again. Unfortunately, we didn't quite get the ball to Chris, standing on one leg in the D, but no doubt he had a pleasant conversation with their keeper while they watched our frantic defence. The post-match beers were never more welcome!!

All in all a great couple of weeks. Saw some amazing hockey, bearing in mind that none of the 1500 players was under 60. We actually had 5 of the 8 attending over-80s in our team, so shouldn't feel too demoralised. Anyway, there is always next year's European Cup to look forward to...