

Tournament Squads Announced!

Coach Bob-Goran Bobbisson has selected the teams for this Saturday's tournament, a tournament that last year's agm decided we wanted to win again after letting Kegworth in 2002 and Cambridge last year walk off with the cup. Using his in-depth knowledge of all his players and based on detailed reports of current form as well as his own tireless travelling to games both home and away, he has announced the following:

Over United (white kit):

Armstrong (gk), Baker, Parker, Smart, Cook, Tagg, Rawlinson, Smith, Carman

Over City (blue kit):

Nichols (gk), Sutton, Dickinson, Bainbridge, Blanchflower, Rule, Handley, R. Tassell, D. Tassell.

Tournament starts soon after midday with team photos; format is the same as before with this year's invited teams being Bluntisham, St. Ives and Kegworth.

VIEW FROM THE BELGIAN BENCH

Modesty prevents me from saying that the Belgium 2004 tour was the best Vets overseas tour yet. Football unites nations better than politicians and if any proof is needed look no further than the Football Happening 2004 in Millen. The Vets mixed with veteran footballers from four other countries and there was no sign of trouble on or off the pitch. This was the 35th annual staging of the festival and I believe the largest yet.

The reports of our two games are on page 3 but it was good to see the Vets return to form losing both games 5-0 and 4-0 respectively. This was no disgrace for our team in view of the loss of key players shortly before departure, crippling injuries sustained during the games, and jetlag. However we did create a new record for the Vets by drinking beer in four different countries in one morning: England, Germany, Holland and Belgium.

As the reluctant captain, replacing the irreplaceable Bob Bainbridge, Mike Little emerged with great credit. His calm, caring and compassionate approach was evident when one of the three taxis taking the squad on a cultural tour of Maastricht before the big game cut dangerously across a bus lane in an attempt to go the wrong way down a one way street. This dangerous move forced a bus to make an emergency stop, missing the taxi by inches. Mike, seeing this from the following taxi, was heard to exclaim "I nearly lost all my ***** midfield then!"

The cultural tour before the second game was no less eventful. We had booked a party of 25 to visit the local

Wine Castle but only three managed to turn up, due to crippling injuries and jetlag. Richard Cox, Bill Handley and I can now bore the pants off people with our knowledge of wines thanks to the three of us completing the winetasting arrangements set up for 25. The most memorable part of the tour was being shown the 2,000-year-old tree which had a number of properties including the ability to increase a man's potency. After eating half the tree, all Richard got from our Flemish guide, Sonja ("I am available, but I have no castle"), was her business card.

Finally we did learn something useful on the tour. The football Happening with 110 teams was a magnificent piece of organisation. The men from Millen said this was entirely down to the hard work of their partners. The women even played a game of football against a German ladies team. In traditional Vets fashion we got right behind the Millen girls with the exception of Mark Nichols who appeared



Bill goes on a diagonal run off the stage in Millen

MATCH REPORT

Sunday May 9

Bluntisham

Bluntisham4(2) v Over Vets0(0)

Team: Safe Hands; Blanco, Little, Parker, Milne; Smith, Buck, Cook, Bainbridge; Chapman, Baker

Scoop Handley couldn't get out of bed, so Baker offers the following brief summary:

Once again the Vets came unstuck against a very good Bluntisham side, although at least we managed to reduce the deficit from the earlier 7-1 home reverse to a more respectable (!) 4-0. Without a recognised striker and with just the bare bones of a team (Geoff Rule turned up midway through the first half (nothing new there then) mainly to tell Coach Bainbridge that he wasn't fit), it was always going to be a matter of damage limitation.

That said, we played some decent stuff at times and, with a proper striker might have created one or two chances to test their 'keeper. Both Little and Chapman picked up injuries, which added to our woes, so we played much of the second half with one of the Bluntisham lads making up our 11.

mesmerised by the talents of the German No 5. This set me thinking about having an Over Vets ladies team – Gina 'Safer Hands' Dollard in goal, me Julie in defence and Melanie 'Oh come on' Chapman up front . . .

Editor's note: a photo of the Vets' Ladies' team appears on our website

Friday May 21

The Green

Over Vets.....2(2) v Hasselt.....3(1)

Team: Briggsy; Baker, Norman, Munro, Sutton; Cook, Rawlinson, Tagg, Pleasants; Carman, Smith; R. Tassell, Oswell

Rik Neven brought his Hasselt team from Belgium and gave us an object lesson in the little-known art of 'sobering up in the course of a game'. Over got off to a stormer, being 2-up inside 20 minutes. The first goal came from who else but Hot-shot Carman and the second was an own goal following a cross from the right by Chas. At this point it all seemed embarrassingly easy and our little ruse of getting the taxi to pick our opponents up an hour late, causing them to down one more beer, was working well.

But it soon turned out Hasselt were merely toying with us and just a couple of minutes before half-time, their big burly centre-forward who had shown even less inclination to do any running than Chas on a particularly lazy day, suddenly decided to jog after a through-ball. Duncan Norman, who had been outstanding throughout the first half, nonchalantly watched his opponent break into a gentle trot, obviously considering he had ample time to reach the ball first and effect a clearance. However the big guy started to work his way through his previously undetected gears and reached the ball a split second ahead of Duncan, nutmegged him and with hardly any backlift unleashed an unstoppable shot inside Briggsy's near post. (Incidentally it turns out the big guy once received an 8-month ban for decking a referee, a fact that wisely we have resisted revealing to Colin Thomas until now.)



Duncan Norman has the big guy well covered (not)

2-1 up at half time and still not unduly worried, we came out for the second half minus the now-disgraced Norman, who was sent packing back to senior football. A proper Vets' central defence of Chas and Duncan Munro would see us right. Wouldn't it? A few minutes into the second half and Hasselt equalised from a corner, the ball not being cleared properly before a shot that was going wide took a deflection past a helpless goalkeeper. The goal that turned out to be the winner came about 10 minutes later and was a result of Duncan Munro losing possession midway inside our half and the Hasselt player running through to slot it past an advancing Briggsy.

Over piled on the pressure in the last 15 minutes, with Carman hitting the bar from the edge of the box, Pleasants missing a golden chance from 10 yards and Baker going wide from a similar distance.

An excellent game was followed by a good-humoured session in the Ex attended by most of the Over contingent as well as several spectators. Thanks to Rik and the boys for the bottles and the trophy - we hope to give you a chance to lose it back one day!

Finally, many thanks to Colin Thomas, Merv Howard and Dave Cattell for officiating.



Over (back row l-r): Oswell, Cattell, Briggsy, R. Tassell, Sutton, Munro, Pleasants, Cook, Howard. (front l-r): Carman, Baker, Tagg, Smith, Rawlinson, Norman, Thomas



Hasselt in the Exhibition. Organiser Rik Neven is third from right in the Vets' cap.



Sean with the Hasselt club president.



CORRECTION to the correction

Last month's Old Git carried a correction to an ad for a pair of unused boots. This correction in fact should have read Ian Sutton's right boot and Geoff Rule's left boot.

Belgium Match Reports

Friday May 21

Millen

Over Vets0(0) v Veterans Piringen5(1)

5pm KO

Crowd: Over Vets supporters, two stretcher bearers from the Belgian Red Cross and a large lady with fishnet stockings and a low cut dress. Weather sunny. Pitch bumpy.

Over Vets struggled to find their feet on a dry and bumpy pitch which bore no comparison to our excellent all weather surface back home. Nevertheless it took Piringen 10 minutes to work out we were struggling before they raised the tempo of the match. Their driving force in midfield was Ray Parlour on loan from Arsenal and he demonstrated his strength by running over Geoff and Loz before laying on their first goal on 11 minutes. His route one pass got a wicked deflection off the uneven surface which deceived Mike Little and Safe Hands and enabled the centre forward to toe poke the opening goal. Safe Hands denied Piringen their second on 16 minutes with a great block save with his feet. Calamity struck after 17 minutes when Alan Johnston limped off to be replaced by Bill Handley (*Johnston replaced by Handley? – that is a calamity – Ed*).

The left winger for Piringen was pacey and skilful but was sent to the ground by Blanco who nearly cut him in half after tripping over a bump on the pitch. The winger then switched to the right side where he found Bill Handley looking strangely menacing. The half time whistle blew as our lads were getting on top with Smarty even managing to get a shot on target.

Mike Little invited the supporters to join his half-time team talk where he urged the team to all-out attack. Bob Milne agreed "I'd rather lose 5-0 than 1-0!"

The 2nd half got off to a bad start when Piringen scored an early goal. Football supporters will know that when you go to the loo during a game it sometimes happens that a goal is scored. I decided to try this as all else was failing and sure enough it worked. When I returned we were 3 down! At this point Mike Little showed his cub scout upbringing when he asked me to find out the name of the opposition so he could lead "three cheers" for them at the end of the game. When I returned from the score tent we were 4-0 down! Ray Parlour (or was it Charlie Dimmock?) added the last by finishing off a slick one-two with a bump in the pitch. The game finished with Bill Handley still looking menacing. A text message was sent to the club Secretary back in Over seeking reinforcements.

Saturday May 22

Millen

Over Vets0(0) v Den Drossard Hasselt....4(3)

6pm KO.

Crowd: Over supporters, Millen ladies and some noisy Germans. Weather sunny. Pitch excellent.

Reinforcements not being forthcoming, the Vets borrowed a father and son from Millen to make their debut in our blue and white colours. This proved an education for them as Andy Buck made our intentions known when his first shot of the game hit a tree. Against the run of play, the Vets found themselves 2 goals down in the first 10 minutes – Safe Hands having no chance from close range finishes.

After 20 minutes, when the third goal was conceded, Mike Little limped off to be replaced by the menacing Bill Handley. Brian Chapman took over the centre back role where he worked tirelessly doing the work of three men – the Marx Brothers. Just before half time Safe Hands came to the rescue again with a point blank save, losing his cap in the process (well it was 3 sizes too big!).

Mike's rallying call at half time stirred the team into producing their best football of the tournament against a supposedly 'veterans' team that had more acne than the Over Colts Under 15 team. The tactic of playing towards the bar in the second half seemed to inspire the team with Andy Buck, Milney, Smarty and Loz all going close. The opposition also had difficulty containing a menacing-looking Handley.

As the Vets got on top, the referee blew his whistle for offside three times when I was sure we were about to score. He also broke up the play by giving free kicks when the Vets had the advantage. However, Geoff's triple spin followed by a front somersault with extra tuck in the penalty area failed to get us the penalty we deserved. Purky brought the crowd to its feet with an attempted overhead kick although he admitted afterwards he had a muscle spasm when in mid-air and he fell on his backside. But it looked classy!

With Over driving forward towards the well-stocked bar the opposition hit us on the break and scored in the last few minutes to put the game beyond reach.

A very creditable performance in the circumstances that sent the supporters away thirsty but happy.

Over Vets' footballing prowess wows the Belgians

Bill Handley reports on a successful trip . . .

Well . . . we didn't overcome our Euro football jinx, losing first to a Dutch team whose midfield was patrolled by a Ray Parlour look-alike and then to a Belgian side who gave us a lesson in how to play with an extreme hang-over. The tour was notable for the high attrition rate, as alcohol (mainly) and old injuries came back to haunt us (on a serious note for a moment, see the para regarding Alan Johnston's terrible injury). The games themselves are covered above by intrepid chairman Bill Wilson but the social side of our game – always as important as the football – deserves a mention too. So here are the edited highlights.

Upon arrival in Millen, it quickly became apparent that our leader was worried. Amid much head-scratching he announced that his magic file – the one containing vital contact and organisational details – was the first casualty. It had become detached from his person and

had failed to make it onto the tour bus; it was probably giving German airport workers their first laugh for years. So our leader's instincts kicked in and with a shrug of his shoulders declared "well . . . Belgium's not a big country". Luckily, Bill's memory served him well and he managed to navigate us to Millen where his instincts were again spot-on as he led us to the nearest bar. Thus began our first session – in a bar we thought was the 'Swimming pool' bar and where we thought all the action was due to start. Well, it was a nice bar . . . good beer . . . good food and nice people (and we kept going back there to top up on solids throughout the weekend) but we couldn't see much football activity and we wondered where the hell the swimming pool was. Then a scout who had been despatched to reconnoitre the area came back with the news that there was a bar with a swimming pool and lots of football pitches only 200 yards down the road.



Messrs Buck and Rule take on Handley and Milne as Purkiss offers tactical advice. Note the helpful signpost – no prizes for guessing which direction Slim went in.

Could this be the place? Five brave souls sallied forth to the next venue and on arrival came upon a man carrying about two dozen loaves of bread. When one of them rolled off the tray onto the floor, one of our number couldn't help sniggering, whereupon the man looked at us intently, threw the tray to the ground and marched over. We immediately thought "****, we've done it now". 'You'll be English then?'

said the man 'Er, um . . . yes' said we. The man's face broke into a broad smile and he offered his hand 'Hi, I'm Willy'. And so it began . . .

Willy was the consummate host. He thought of everything and instinctively knew the kind of thing we would be interested in (*I thought you said there weren't any lap-dancing clubs – confused Ed*). We took taxis to a town called Bilzen where he thought we would have a good night. When we got there the place was almost deserted but, of course, we were forgetting that Belgium isn't blighted with British licensing laws and in the time it took to eat a prime cut of beef the place was buzzing. Some 15,000 people descend on the place to listen to live music and drink copious amounts of beer. Crammed into an area little bigger than the pedestrianised centre of Cambridge this meant no elbow room and it took around half an hour to walk about 200 metres down the main street. Those of us who did this journey with a distended bladder will remember it for life.

The youth team members of the club (i.e. under 40) decided it would be a good idea to ascend to the top of a 200ft crane and jump off. To their credit they did this whilst retaining all stomach contents. Not to be out-done, Geoff 'I've Tugged for England' Rule did likewise. Those who know Geoff will be surprised to hear that he neither climbed the crane's jib unaided, nor jumped off without being tied to the bungee elastic. When interviewed afterwards he let it be known that it was pretty tame compared with shinning to the top of Over communication tower (you know, the one next to the windmill) which he regularly used to do to round off a Friday night after 12 pints (*allegedly – Ed*).

The next morning was typical of the whole weekend with a number of faces missing at breakfast and it seemed that each morning a different set of Over men had to overcome his personal anguish.

The football happening was an incredible organisational feat. Over 100 teams from France, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium and, for the first time this year, England, played games over three days. Willy was obviously the main man but everyone in the club, including wives and girlfriends worked tirelessly so that we could all have a great time. The social side was equally as important as the football (just as well, given the results - Ed) (*I'll do the Ed's bits if it's all the same – real Ed*) and this took place in a marquee as big as the all-weather pitch. Live bands played all night and there was a barbecue and 'some' beer. The sessions seemed to be almost open-ended and



Shown above is the Millen Ladies team, who certainly look capable of giving us a good beating

some brave souls were still standing on the tables at daybreak and beyond. I mention no names here for obvious reasons but it will come as no surprise that they are the same names alluded to in the previous paragraph.

A trip to Maastricht gave everyone a chance to catch up on some culture and to see our future seat of government. The family men searched for presents and the rest sat in bars and drank coke. Even the normally indomitable Mark 'Slim' Nichols looked peaky, complaining that something from the night before had disagreed with him – either the 50th beer, the 80th fag or the German lady footballer.

Later that day, in the garden of the Zwarte-Stok Hotel, some members of the party still had a colour reminiscent of the Dulux 'White with a hint of pink' range. Geoff Rule thought of an ideal way to liven them up. Asking two of them to hold hands, which (and this goes to show how out of form they were) they did, he then made the connection between them and an electric cattle fence. It worked.

On the last evening, a large sub-group decided that another trip to Bilzen was in order to consume some more solids before a return to the 'Happening' beer tent. It was over a pint of Belgian Guinness that the main picture was taken – the only game that the Vets didn't lose and confirmation that one or two members had a miserably misspent youth.

The rest of the tour went largely without hitch, Chairman Bill managing to shepherd his charges back to Dusseldorf airport without further loss.

It was left to Garry 'Chopper' Swain to

give a vote of thanks to Bill Wilson for organising the tour. It seemed that RyanAir did their level best to scupper the tour but Bill doggedly refused to let them spoil the party. Everyone had a great time and we made many new friends that we hope to see in Over before too long (*don't get too dewy-eyed and sincere, Bill – remember this is the 'Old Git' – Ed*).

Johnno injured

Alan Johnston (the Kegworth skipper brought in to bolster our defence) spent a large part of the Belgium tour with his right foot elevated, having limped off after 10 minutes of the first game. On return home and following a visit to Nottingham's Queen's Medical Centre, it was confirmed that he had ruptured his Achilles tendon. He will be plastered for eight weeks (from knee to toe, that is). I'm sure everyone in the club will join with me in wishing him a speedy recovery.

DATE FOR DIARY

A long way off I know, but we have a home game against a touring team from the South called the Old Pretenders on Friday August 27th. The game will be on the Green and will be followed by much mirthful merry-making in the Exhibition. Details will follow in the next OG, but I mention it now so that when the missus suggests a bank holiday break you can manfully stand up to her and point out that your Club's needs must come first.