



EUROPE 2023



4 months | 6 countries | 8 house swaps | 10 journey legs



Football & More Fun

Yesterday was a full one. By 7.45 we were in a taxi heading for the Chelsea Stadium - Stamford Bridge - for a tour. Surrounded by a railway line on two sides and estate housing and shopping precinct it was not something on my bucket list but I actually really enjoyed it for itself and the obvious enthusiasm shown by my fellow travellers. The field area itself was much smaller than expected (in fact the physical dimensions of the ground make it the smallest of all of the English Premier League grounds), but it was beautifully kept. The grass, with 10% synthetic fibres, was manicured to perfection and heated from below! But the real eye opener was the difference between the change rooms. Our tour leader told us of the lengths to which the Chelsea staff used to go to make the “away” changing room very uncomfortable — dingy lighting, small area, low seats, cold showers, one toilet, low ceiling etc. Things have changed nowadays (hot water is now plumbed in to the showers) but there are still subtle techniques employed to ensure that the opposition doesn’t get too comfortable (although not to a degree to make them want to seek retribution on the field). Amazing really, especially when you then see the salubrious Chelsea room(s) which includes everything - including an ice bath, team talk room, massage room and massive interactive TV.



Everyone had a great deal of fun watching themselves running through the tunnel on to the ground on the huge TV screens in the stands. Sitting in the “hot seat” in the media theatre pretending to dodge interview questions post game or signing a contract to play worth millions was also a highlight. Stamford Bridge Stadium is certainly worth a visit.



After the tour we were taken to the Xcel Centre for another round of games against Chelsea and a few different local opponents. We spent the first hour observing the 50s playing from the relative warmth of the club rooms. It was bitterly, bitterly cold and the 50s had a torrid time against some extremely tough competition. It was a great warm up for them for the tournament in Cardiff next week.



Then it was the 70s turn to don their strip, put on beanies and gloves and run out into the chilly air with sun setting low in the sky making it particularly difficult to play. The 70s first game was against a Caribbean team. They were a particularly strong and physical lot and not many looked to be in the 60s let alone 70s. Our boys really stood up to them extremely well and only went down by 1 goal right at the end of the short game. Sig's ankles are quite bruised today. The other three games were played in freezing conditions and the team came away with two draws and a win. Things are certainly looking positive with lots of great patches of stylish play which is a pleasure to watch. The boys are beginning to gel into a strong team.

Today is a lay day for the group so we took the train into the British Museum. It is a massive place and we saw a huge range of things that the British have “collected” from around the world. The most amazing exhibits were the Rosetta Stone, a whole Greek temple, Egyptian mummies and an Easter Island moai. To be honest we ran out of puff fairly quickly and decided to head for a cafe to have a nice lunch next to the heater. We succeeded in that regard - a great meal of pasta and pizza was really enjoyed, especially considering the rather bland offerings we have had at the hotel lately.

The next two days are also lay days so we will take each day at a time and plan accordingly.





Walkeroos 70s vs Caribbean 60s



Walkeroos 70s and Chelsea 60s local team

