

## The Hun Tour

26-29 May 2005

By 05.45 on the 26 May 2005, 14 members (without a late Dominic Getting) were ready for check-in at Heathrow Airport. Everyone brimmed with excitement until the tour polo-shirts, tickets and itineraries were handed out – at which point the memories flooded back and a simultaneous nervous jitter began...

The 2005 tour was going to be unique. To start with the RHUL Old Boys RFC had no rugby ball and no complete rugby team. Budapest was the furthest the club had travelled and Hungarian rugby was an unknown entity. Yet spirits remained upbeat and determined to make this one of the classic of tours.

Budapest was hot. From arrival to departure it was sunny with blue skies and temperatures rarely dropping below 25<sup>0</sup>C. After the hotel check-in and a few cheeky beers the team gathered for an update of notable brevity by 'Tsar' Mark Lloyd Davies. Between the introduction and circum-point it was clear that there was an urgent need to find a rugby ball and more players. Moreover, three tour virgins were summoned 'to be found': Marc Comb and the Wilde brothers (their three year absence being deemed a good enough reason).

Four hours later the Old Boys gathered for a quick 'training session' in a nearby park to play some touch rugby to the amusement of a few onlookers. Unfortunately, to the disgust of James Williams, but insistence of Purple Heart, an American Football was used. However, the tour bong, which had metamorphosed into two: one larger watering can capable of holding 6+ pints and a 'mini-self bong', had noted Purple Heart's slight oversight...

The first night on the town started in 'Champs' ex-pat bar where the bong was generously introduced to everyone. As a result the rest of the evening was somewhat hazy and eventful.

The following day (Friday) gave everyone ample opportunity to sight see around the beautiful and sunny city of Budapest. Popular choices were a river cruise down the Danube river, with hilly historical Buda on the left bank and the flat, more industrial Pest on the right. Free beer in the sun passing sunbathing Budapest babes were further joys of the day, and got everyone in the right mood for a Friday night out on the town!

Saturday was a rugby day. At 2pm the athletic and ready RHUL Old Boys RFC met in the hotel lobby to travel to the first rugby match. The journey was one and half hours to a town South-West of Budapest called Kecskemet. The lads had spread the word and asked around for players the previous evening, which lead to three girls (one Hungarian, two French), two Dutch guys who have never played rugby before, and one French lad (Antione 'A La Screech') to board the coach in hilarious fashion for our first fixture.

Kecskemet ARC is the oldest rugby team in Hungary. Their President (Belo or Papa with a large Tom Sellick look-a-like tash) founded Hungarian rugby in 1979 at a local technical College, and is known as the 'father of Hungarian rugby'. 'Papa rugby' self-taught himself rugby by reading a French coaching manual written in Russian!

The match kicked off at 5pm with Oisín Dolly stepping in as referee. Within 45 seconds, some quick second phase rugby sent Matt Wilde flying down the wing to score for the touring side. This was duly converted by Sam Walker resulting in the quickest seven point ever scored by the Old Boys.

The next 20 minutes belonged to the Old Boys as they quickly secured the ball in the forwards and got it out to the backline in order to avoid being mauled by a few massive local Hungarians. The

Old Boys backline dominated the match and the vice-captain Davros proved incisive with his speed and side steps to score the next two tries. Both were converted by Sam Walker.

The forwards began to run the ball with more confidence, with some thumping strides made by the skipper Marc Comb. The next try came from loose play and good support from the open side flanker (our French import) Antoine ('A La Screeh') who scored the fourth converted try of the match. At this stage the Old Boys were winning 28-0, and Kecskemet decided to play their game by returning to forwards mauling. One line out deep inside the Old Boys 22 lead to a Hungarian mauling juggernaut to trundle on towards their first try despite valiant efforts from Marc Comb and James Williams. However, the Old Boys quickly responded with more running rugby, which resulted in Purple Heart running in the Old Boys fifth try just before half time (33-5).

The second half was a little tougher with injuries resulting in a depleted 13 man Old Boys squad for 20 minutes of the game. The half started well however, with more swift backline play and a tries from Wilde senior and Davros. But the next two converted tries belonged to Kecskemet as they exploited the diminished Old Boys backline. However, the Old Boys responded with equal ferocity, as Barry White, the smallest man on the pitch dumped tackled like a man possessed. This was rewarded with two further tries from Davros taking his tally to five. In the last 10 minutes fitness was flagging on both sides, but the Old Boys managed to keep the ball moving until Antione ran in the final try under the posts. This was duly converted by the prop, Mark Lloyd Davies, who scored the final points of the match which resulted in a 64-19 victory for the Old Boys.

Following the obligatory post match photos and beers the Old Boys were driven to the City centre where we had a tour of the local council chambers, met the City Major and exchanged gifts and diplomatic gestures ('Tsar' Mark Lloyd Davies was particularly excited at this point). Belo 'Papa Rugby' then kindly showed us around the beautiful city centre, with its rich and varied history. Belo also showed the lads a monument which showed that Kecskemet was twinned with Coventry (poor Kecskemet-*Ed*), followed by a trip to a former Russian Officer's Mess where the banquet and drinking session began. Here further speeches and exchanges of gifts took place (Davros was awarded Man of the Match) and the bong, perfectly fluent in Hungarian, decided to play a prominent role in the evening proceedings. The fact that it was 'Papa rugby's' birthday gave a further edge to the occasion -although for some the entire third half was a little hazy due to the introduction of a locally distilled Hungarian Apricot Brandy, which tasted neither of apricots or brandy...After thanking Kecskemet and Belo for their fantastic hospitality, the bus journey home was fantastic with songs, shenanigans, a 'naked bus' and little bit of 'naked skydiving'...

Sunday was a recovery day, with the traditional exchange of stories and preparation for the flight home. Mark Wilde was awarded Man of the Tour for his cheeky 'monkey-like' behaviour on and off the pitch and Davros received the Dominic Getting Cup for scoring 29 of the Old Boys 64 points. By the early evening, the touring party arrived back in Blighty smelling of apricot brandy or worse, and everyone bid a fond farewell having just enjoyed a successful and splendid 2005 tour.

#### Old Boys RFC Team Hungary 2005

1. Leo 'Purple Heart' Sykes
2. Mark Wilde
3. Mark Lloyd Davies
4. Martin O'Meara
5. Stefen (Mark the other Dutch groupie played on the wing for Kecskemet)
6. James Williams
7. Antoine 'A La Screeh'
8. Marc Comb (Capt.)

9. Barry 'Chalky' White
10. Sam Walker
11. Dominic Getting
12. Matt Griffin
13. Richard James
14. Matt Wilde
15. Davros (Vice-Capt.)

Score board:

5	Matt Wilde		
2	Sam Walker		
5	Davros		
2	Sam Walker		
5	Davros		
2	Sam Walker		
5	Antoine 'A La Screech'		
2	Sam Walker		
		5	Kecskemet
5	Leo Sykes		
5	Mark Wilde		
5	Davros		
2	Davros		
		7	Kecskemet
		7	Kecskemet
5	Davros		
5	Davros		
2	Davros		
5	Antoine 'A La Screech'		
2	Mark Lloyd Davies		

