

MEN 040 TEAM – NOTTINGHAM 2017

I just like to say it has been an honour to Captain my country and knew it would have its difficulties. As you know we brought together a team, I felt had a huge opportunity in causing some real damage over the weekend. We did as England and Ireland were worried about us. I feel if the scheduling had favoured us and a few rallies here and there then we would've been right up there. Great passion, commitment and belief from the lads and proud to be part of this team.



Well where do I start. Lloyd and I started off reasonably early and arrived at the hotel just after lunchtime. We had to go shopping as Lloyd had left his shirt at home. I was taken on a tour of Nottingham town centre until we found a John Lewis. Luckily there were the two specific brands of shirt that Lloyd was satisfied with, he ended buying a black, form fitting AAARRRMMMMAAANNNIII shirt.

The rest of the team had confirmed they would arrive at 4pm ish in time for photos before our match started at 5pm. Dallas and Crowley travelled together and were held up due to Crowley using Dallas' car as a mini office and running teleconferences on the way up. I had confidence in Paul Johnson turning up in time as he wanted to have some lunch and settle in at the hotel and said he would arrive at 2pm. Unfortunately, I don't think he has ever been on the M1. JD picked up Barrell as he escaped from school after half a days work. All in all we managed to start as required.

Our first match was against Scotland. First match on was no5, Dallas vs Blair. Dallas confidently took a 2 game lead with good target hitting and chopping the ball in for winners. He lost a bit of focus in the next 2 games as Blair increased his intensity to draw 2-2. Dallas received support and some tips from the team and managed to win comfortable in the fifth. Wales 1-0 up.

Next up was no3, Jon Davies vs Barry. Jon lost the first game and looked like he was still in the car. He then showed good precision to create the openings and finished the rallies with great attacking shots to win 3-1. Wales 2-0 up.

At no1 Paul Johnson vs Peter. The newly crowned British over40s champion was too sharp and decisive but Paul competed during a slow start to the games once he got used to the pace Peter was playing at and lost 3-0. Wales 2-1.

Next up at no4, Crowley vs John. John was a very awkward player but Crowley was in control the whole match and won 3-0. Match to Wales 3-1.

Last up was no2, Lloyd vs Grant. This match was a mix of styles with Lloyd attacking anything loose and Grant retrieving and using the full height of the court. Lloyd won a competitive 3-0. Wales win 4-1 vs Scotland.

The second match was against Ireland on Saturday morning. The Irish had just beaten England the night before in a brutal contest. Just in case, they decided to bring in Steve Richardson at no1 for the remaining two games! Thanks lads.

First match on at no5 was Barrell vs Neal. We were concerned that Barrell would show his attacking back wall boast too soon, but it came in the fifth rally! This match was nip and tuck

all the way and Barrell made Neal work for every point. At 1-1, Barrell was leading 10-8 but Neal played some tight squash to squeeze out Barrell and take the 3rd game. In similar fashion Neal just took a couple of vital points near the end of the game to win 3-1. Wales 1-0 down.

Next was no3, JD vs Dara. Dara won the match for Ireland vs England the night before. The first game was very close with both players moving each other well around the court. JD takes it 12-10. In the next two games JD showed decisive shot making and rolled several nicks. Dara did not know what day it was. Great 3-0 win for Jon. 1-1 in matches.

At no1, Paul had the pleasure of playing Steve. This was a really good game with PJ causing Steve some problems with his deceptive holds and shots. Steve just managed to do enough to win 3-1. Wales 2-1 down.

Next was no4, Crowley vs Nick. Another big game as both players picked up some brilliant shots. Nick has an awkward style and Crowley couldn't quite hit his measured length as he usually does going down 3-1. Wales lose 3-1.

Last up was Lloyd at no2 vs Rob. Although we had lost the match this game was of great quality. Lloyd not allowing the ball to hit the back wall and create winners with his powerful attacking shots and deceptive flicks. Rob was just metronome and just kept plugging away with a strong basic game playing the ball to all 4 corners. Lloyd lost 3-2. We lost the match 4-1. Could've been very different!

The English tasting blood, couldn't wait to get us on court, 5 minutes after our match vs Ireland had finished. We had the obligatory Team photo before the start of the final match on the show court.

First up at no5, Matt vs Joss. Matt struggled for rhythm against the tall Joss at the start of each game, but improved as he constructed some good rallies. He lost 3-0. Wales 1-0 down. Next on court was no3, Jon vs Jonathan. This was a tight match with both players moving each other around the court. JD couldn't quite replicate his shot making and intensity in his game from the earlier games and lost 3-0. Wales 2-0 down.

The third match on was no.1 Paul vs Jamie. Once again a competitive match but Goodrich picked up everything and put the ball away decisively when PJ hit anything loose. PJ lost 3-0. Wales 3-0 down.

At no4 Crowley vs Paul. Another tough match with good quality squash. Crowley still not quite comfortable with his swing dug in but Paul Boyle just kept the pace up putting Crowley under pressure losing 3-0. Wales 4-0 down.

Last on was no2, Lloyd vs Ashley. Another entertaining match with Lloyd looking for outrageous winners and volleying everything, nullifying Bowlings' forehand strengths. Lloyd lost a close 3-0. Wales 5-0 down.

Tough to back up two huge matches vs Ireland then England. Great effort from the team.

Final positions 1. Ireland, 2. England, 3. Wales, 4. Scotland.

Onto the presentation night. It started with David Harden announcing his retirement, due to the stick a certain Welsh Player gave him over his ref ability through the weekend. He was joking!

The Irish team were awarded the title and Cup for the 4th year in a row. Neal Murphy took the mic and made sure the English knew about their record. He further went on to discuss how the English no2 bottled their match with 4 match balls against Dara. But suggested at

least his wife had something to smile about as she was Irish. Once again the Welsh were mentioned as a surprise package and will be vary of us in the future. He was impressed with Lloyd's attire on court and during breakfast saying he could be a fashion icon or does he just dress in the dark. The meal and disco prevailed and everyone had a great time with some hilarious moments from several of our team. Off the back of this Lloyd is running a 'how to chat up women' course. There has to be a mention of 'MEGA MUNCH' the place to go when you need a post drink meal. Also its worth mentioning that Barrell seemed to have bought drinks for everyone at the hotel bar apart from his own team! He wasn't too impressed and thought someone had stolen his card when he woke up to the bill at hotel reception.

A thoroughly enjoyable weekend of squash, socialising and entertainment.

Thanks,
Matt Lloyd Lewis(Capt)

