

U.S.P.E Moscow 2003

Shooting

Squad

John Emmerson	Team Manager
Fred Jennings	Team Coach
Phil Smith	Rifle Manager
Mick Barnes	Air Pistol
Keith Brookes	50m prone
Dave Erskine	Air Pistol
Dave Hodson	50m prone + 3 x 40 (3P)
Ann Roberts	Ladies 50m prone + 3 x 20 + Air Rifle
Kevin Sinclair	3 x 40 + Air Rifle
Janine Weaving	Ladies 50m prone + 3 x 20 + Air Rifle

The squad left Bisley camp for Moscow in the early hours of Wednesday the 3rd of September 2003. Our passage through check in and customs was, as expected, long but logical in its progress. This was in stark contrast to our arrival at Domodedovo airport, Moscow. Little did we realize that every item down to the last air pellet had to be documented and checked prior to our admittance to the country. It took about two and a half hours to clear customs. In the end, good teamwork took care of the obligatory stream of paperwork required.

Transport to the hotel was equally interesting. A seven seater minibus had been provided for the whole team and our luggage. Negotiations resulted in a convoy of vehicles, one of which was a very battered car of interesting, but very definitely Russian origin. Those of us travelling in it were terrified in case the driver smoked, and ignited the almost overpowering presence of petrol fumes.

Accommodation was in the Hotels originally provided as part of the 1980 Olympic village. There were, I believe, four blocks, each of which could accommodate 1000 guests. In our hotel there was accommodated, International youth football teams from several countries, in addition to all the teams taking part in the U.S.P.E. The accommodation was certainly better than expected. Only let down by the lift access, reduced to three lifts out of six due to new lifts being fitted, and the 15 minute wait for the water to run warm in a morning.

The following day was a bright and early start with all teams being bussed from the hotel to the range at Mystishchy. A journey of about 40 minutes, accomplished with the assistance of several police cars with lights and sirens wailing. These journeys turned into an experience on several levels. There was the methodology used by the various teams of police cars, which raised emotions varying from utter hilarity, to pure terror when the convoy was taken through a closed and flashing railway level crossing without a moments hesitation. Then there was the obvious cultural differences on view through the coach windows on each journey.

There was the usual bustle of activity on arrival at the range. There was the location of firearms and equipment. Finding the administration office and ascertaining who could speak English. Then discovering that the practice time for our 3P shooters, was hopelessly inadequate. Once we were orientated and the protocols, or lack of them recognized. The team pulled together and practice was accomplished after a fashion.

The end of that day saw the opening ceremony take place in front of the main administration block. My appearance in full uniform complete with helmet, caused a stir I was not quite prepared for. Every camera in

the area, was at one stage pointed in my direction. The image of the British Bobby is known world wide and everyone wanted a picture. There was a filthy propaganda rumour that I was wearing white socks at this time. This being due to having just changed out of a tracksuit. This will of course be denied with the utmost rigour. *My rather short step (some described it as mincing) during the ceremony was entirely due to my trying to maintain the pace of the rather diminutive female officer cadet carrying our name placard.*

The speeches and Russian dancing were followed by an interesting display by Russian anti-terrorist troops, firing off assault rifles and pistols in time to some rock music played over the public address system.

Day three saw the start of competition. The quality of the event is highlighted by the presence of many Olympic quality shooters and World Champions.

In the air pistol Dave Erskine, who was shooting alongside the current World Champion Boris Kakarov and achieved a 546, with Mick Barnes close behind on 536. Neither was placed, but in view of the exalted competition, they both acquitted themselves well.

The ladies 50m prone competition saw Janine Weaving and Ann Roberts both put in good performances to finish in 4th (585) and 6th (583) respectively. This event, not being an Olympic discipline, did not have an Olympic final so there was no chance to better their positions further. On the build up to the championships, we were led to believe that each pair of shooters would also form a 'team', but this wasn't to be the case. Had this been the situation then the pair of them would have taken second place behind Germany.

Finally for GBR was the men's 50m Prone competition which saw both Dave Hodson and Keith Brookes, take to the stage. It must be pointed out that the conditions were very tricky with a strong breeze and changing light conditions. Dave scored 578 and Keith 588 to take 8th position in the Olympic Final.

The final, shot in similar conditions, saw Keith score 101.7 to lift himself into 7th position. Considering that the majority of the opposition had previously won Olympic and World Cup medals, Keith's performance was outstanding.

Saturday saw Janine Weaving and Ann Roberts taking part in the Ladies three positional rifle. Ann achieved a magnificent 558 to place her in 4th and securing a place in the Olympic final. Janine achieved a score of 537 which put her in 11th position, which in that quality of competition is an achievement in itself.

The entire team got behind Ann for her final, which saw her slip to 6th position, but what a magnificent achievement by both shooters.

That evening saw us escorted into Moscow for a brief visit to the walls of the Kremlin. It was Moscow day, and the city was heaving with celebrations and revellers. An interesting trip not to be forgotten by any of us.

Sunday had Kevin Sinclair and Dave Hodson competing in the men's 3P. Once again the competition was of World Class standard. Kevin achieved 1083 and Dave 1091 which for both was a little off personal best scores, but in view of the opposition was very creditable indeed.

Ann Roberts and Janine Weaving were at this time taking part in the Ladies Air Rifle event. This was when the lack of practice time became apparent, when Ann discovered that she would have to put her rifle down between each shot to change target. This was not conducive to proper rhythm and she suffered as a result, concluding with a score of 368. Janine by this time, was well into her stride, and a score of 385 placed her into the Olympic final at 6th place. The resulting final was a nail biting affair with Janine concluding the shoot with a final shot scored as 10.9. The only maximum of the final. She finished in 8th place, but what a creditable performance.

The final day of competition was Monday the 8th September. Kevin Sinclair was the only shooter competing on this day in the men's 10m air rifle. The rest of the squad except John Emmerson and Mick Barnes who were sent on hat duty (a visit to a shop to buy Russian uniform hats) supported Kevin on this final shoot. Kevin was

not happy with his performance, and finished a little down the field. This is no great shame to Kevin, and I once again point out the quality of the opposition. He did us proud, as did the rest of our squad.

The closing ceremony was an interesting affair. The medal presentation started without anyone realising it was in full swing. Some were eating and some were taking advantage of the rather large supply of Vodka available on each table. Hats, ties and badges were swapped, photographs taken, and parting words spoken. The following day we were on our way home. Getting through the airport was nearly as difficult as our arrival. The team had arrived at the airport well over three hours prior to the flight, and we all had to run, to get onto the plane before the gate closed.

The conclusion to the report is a simple reflection. We took seven shooters to a competition of World Class standard. Four out of the seven got into Olympic finals, and the others did not shame us by any standards. This was a worthy team, and all pulled together as such. A memorable event, regrettably no medals, but Team GB put in a performance to be proud of.

John Emmerson
Team Manager