

Iron Five

12 December 2009

Plymouth

Indoors

So this weekend was Iron Five in Plymouth. It was a completely new experience for myself, as well as for the rest of the team-Ben, Jake, Neil and Armitage; collectively known as the Barbershop Quartet.



The weekend started at 5am on the Saturday morning as we made the long drive to Bristol to pick up our fifth player (Armitage) and the even longer drive to Plymouth. We made good time and arrived at the sports centre at approximately 9.30am with plenty of time spare before our first game.

Our first game was against Nice Bristols. It was a cagey affair but our quality shone through and we came away with the win. 8-5 to the Quartet.

After an hour break and a trip to Sainsbury's, we came up against Don't Panic. Yet again, it was a cagey affair. We clearly weren't playing to the standard we should have been (possibly only 80-85%). However, it was clear to see we were the better team and rightfully deserved the win. 7-4 to the Quartet.

Our third game was against S.U.I.T., who were the bottom seeds of our group. This one was a potential banana skin-they were strong, fast and tall. We had watched them earlier lose to the top seeds but they worked very hard and appeared to be technically sound. As in our other games, we

got off to a slow start and they made us pay for it. After trading points for about 10 minutes, S.U.I.T. took a two point lead with about 5 minutes to go. We had to up our game and after some very strong defending from the team, we managed to score 4 points without reply to take the win. Special mention to Jake who, when heads seemed to be dropping on our team, rose to the challenge and put in a fantastic defensive display. He even managed to out jump the opposition who were, as is usually the case with Jake, a great deal taller than he was. 9-7 to the Quartet.

Our final game of the day was against the top seeds in our group, Weasle United. The less we say about this match the better. Not so much for the result but more for spirit in which the game was played. However the result did not effect us-we had kept our seeding for the day, which meant we could finish no lower than 16 overall. 8-2 to Weasle.

As we had finished for the day, we showered and made our way to the Youth Hostel where we were going to be staying for the night. We got pizza from Pizza Hut and alcohol from Spar and spent the early evening playing drinking games. The party was, to put it bluntly, a disappointment so we decided to go our sperate ways; Jake and myself went back to the Hostel to get an early night and the rest of the team stayed out for a socialising session that Red could be proud of.

Next morning we had a team breakfast at McDonalds after I insisted for pancakes. We then prepared ourselves for our first game of the day against the Live Cougars, which was the crossover between the 8th and 9th seeds. I don't know whether it was because of the cold or just nerves but we couldn't hold on to our catches. After a couple of silly turnovers we were soon 2-0 down. However, we soon woke up, both defensively and offensively, and were back in the game at 6-6. Special mention to Ben at this point for upping his game and putting in some BIG d's, including an epic layout d just in front of our end-zone. Unfortunately the next point was not scored by us and so it finished, 7-6 to the Cougars. We finished the stronger team, despite the result, and as the Cougars mentioned in their post-game speech, if the game was on for another 5 minutes, the victory would have more than likely have been ours. Highlight of this game was the point that I scored that I wasn't even aware of-I was in the end-zone, signalling for Armitage to clear out and the next thing I know, Jake had somehow thrown the disc into my outstretched hand.

We were now up against SPINE in the 9th-16th seed crossover game. As was the case against Cougars, we got off to a poor start and were pretty much playing catch-up for the whole game, a sentiment I believe was shared by Neil in particular as he kicked a cone out of frustration (cue comic boos from the sideline). Once we had figured out the right game plan we looked more confident on the disc, as was highlighted by the fluid point we scored towards the end of the match. I passed the disc to Armitage in the middle of the pitch before sprinting down a third of the pitch, where Armitage played a beautiful disc for me to run on to. As soon as I came down with the disc, I passed it straight to Ben in the end-zone. Unfortunately it was all too little too late. Once again we finished

the stronger team but we had conceded to many points in the early stages of the match. 11-5 to SPINE.

The highest we could finish at this point was 13th. Cue the crossover game between ourselves and the 13th seeds, Air Badgers. As was the case against Weasle United, they were just too quick for us to do any real damage, both on offence and defence. Our zone was very strong in the latter stages of the game but we weren't efficient enough with the disc and with time ticking away, we never really had a chance to pull some points back. 8-3 to the Air Badgers.

So our final game of the weekend was for 15th place against the Nice Bristols in a repeat of our first game of the tournament. We wanted this win so much. Firstly because it would mean we finish on a high after losing 4 in a row. Secondly because it would give us that 50% success ratio we were all aiming for at the very least. Since our first game against one another, the Nice Bristols had gradually improved their game (hence being the current 15th seeds). However, despite the losses, we too had improved as a team. Not taking anything away from the Nice Bristols as they were both a solid team and a well-spirited team (a fact that didn't go unnoticed as they won the overall spirit prize) but they were lucky to get even four past us. With quick, decisive passing we ripped apart their zone whilst at the same time forcing them to play long with a zone of our own. 8-4 to the Quartet.

So we won four of the eight games we played over the course of the weekend and although we dropped our seeding, we could walk away with our heads held high. If this was any other weekend or any other indoor tournament this team that represented Red might not have been everyone's initial first choice but we gave 100% for one another and the results reflect that.

I was unanimously named as the team's MVP. However, instead of blowing my own trumpet, I'm going to give credit where credit is due;

Armitage-I think other teams underestimated our pick-up as he's clearly not the quickest player. Or tallest. Or even the fittest. But he is a confident player with a fantastic ultimate brain. Despite the fact he's never trained with Red, he fitted in brilliantly-he played as a handler, as a cutter, he got assists and he scored points. Defensively, he had no problems adapting to our zone and played as both a deep and a wing. Most importantly he gave us 100% and we couldn't ask for more.

Off the pitch he was a barrel of laughs and had no problem with socialising with the rest of the team. Obviously he already knows Ben but he wasn't intimidated by the prospect of being part of a new team.

Ben-in my opinion the big guy came of age at this tournament. As well as being almost regarded as our go-to guy in the end-zone, he was always there for the short pass. He handled when he had to and looked confident on the disc when he did. Defensively he was top draw-with his tall frame he easily brought down the disc time after time.

Hats off to Ben who also took a hard fall in our last game yet continued to play, even when he didn't necessarily have to.

Jake-my MVP. Despite being our JM, he was one of our most experienced players, and it showed. His hard work took the pressure off other players and allowed the team to play some great ultimate. A big part of both our defence and offence.

Neil-as a ultimate player it gives you great confidence knowing you have someone like Dr Humpage on your team. As a handler you have the confidence that he will catch anything and everything you throw into the end-zone. He was constantly running, finding space and offering cuts. He was also confident when on the disc to pass it into and around the end-zone.

Special shot out to Ben for sorting out car rental for the weekend and stepping up as the team's driver.

A great weekend had by all-probably one of the best tournaments we've all been apart of for a long time.

Bring on Iron Five 2010!!!

Spencer Barrs