

Can any of you remember 5th November 2005? Years and years ago I know, but I remember it vividly. It happens like that when you are older. Can't remember where I left my new glasses either (thanks to Dray's Eyewear ... new store now open ... lots of green soft furnishings though???) Anyway, back to the story, November 5th 2005. That was the infamous gunpowder "Let's give Marlborough a crap cup Handicap plot". An awful night that I still wake up in sweats thinking about. I was reading on the web site the report <http://www.marlboroughbc.org.uk/>, and it sounded like we were little babies playing against grown adults. I remember the humiliation, the feeling of frustration at not being able to hit the shuttle or move quickly enough. All bad feelings. Well times have certainly changed!!! The cup triumph for the Mixed A this season was truly awesome. The cup is old and battered, the crowd resembled the cup ... only joking Phil and Judith, and Jacqui, and Andy Munson, and Justin and Brian and Gary, but possibly not Ken and Yvonne. Lol. Oh alright, I was only kidding about you 2 too. The cup is battered, and the trophies are small and cheap and tacky, but my god, they mean so much to quite a few of us.

I wanted to mark the occasion by writing a witty match report ...but wit has passed with age, to be replaced by cynical ramblings! I'll therefore try and contain my mad cow and explain. I have lots of images and feelings buzzing around in my head following our victory. I keep getting flash backs of rallies and shots and noises and faces. It all passed so quickly, and I'm sad that I didn't see enough of anyone else playing to take it all in. I want more of those images to savour for when I am sitting in my chair in my twilight years.

The things I do remember.

Being told the handicap ... 13 ... God, we will get hammered!!! Cramic B got 11.5 against these and they got hammered. Cramic B stuffed us ... OMG it's all over. I need the loo again.

Watching Feathers warm up. Oooer. They are sooooo good. They are fast and seem so young, and move really well, and seem so young, and smash so hard, ... and seem so very very young!!!

Watching Kyle and Amanda start off against Stuart and Claire I was nervous and excited and impressed by the quality of badminton. They all had a backhand. I'd so love to have a backhand (I wonder if Lee can make one for me along with my new glasses, which I need cause I'm getting old, in his new shop?). Kyle has been so good this season. Very consistent, and has been a joy to play with. Amanda has also had her best season for a while. She is moving well, and hasn't lost her touch; a great combination. But how good to see them holding their own, and having confidence to play their shots against such a good pair. I have little video images in my mind of certain moments in that first match. Kyle stretching and smashing and clearing, a whirling dervish of power and then suddenly, dropping with calm subtlety, and every now and again getting angry at himself for missing a shot. Daft bugger. Amanda, calm and relaxed at the net, picking up cross courts and having the confidence to play Claire at the net. Exuding an air of authority and experience. Picking her shots, finding the space, encouraging the lift. Brilliant!!!

That game was in front of me, and I wanted to focus there so as to avoid seeing Jack on the court to my left. The thought of playing him worried me. I didn't want to see him play till I had too. Bloody Kids!!! I have deleted a whole paragraph about his quality and badminton prowess, he is a nice lad, and as I found out on the night, as old as my little boy!!! God, I am Old!!! But I need to focus on our players. Matt and Charlotte were thrown in at the deep end against Jack and Emma for their first

match. What do I remember about that game ... apart from needing the loo again!!! Matt, after missing so many club nights was at last hitting the shuttle well. He has a natural technique and hits so cleanly. Longer rallies are what I remember. Matt moving well at the back. Shot for shot against Jack, and mixing it up nicely to move Emma around. Matt always smiles. He turns to us on the bench behind as the shuttle lands in, right in the corner, and smiles and makes a silly comment as though he is thoroughly enjoying the challenge of playing against such quality opposition. What a contrast then, but indeed a perfect foil to have Charlotte at the net. Fierce and determined, Charlotte is a real competitor. She has worked so hard all season to improve her mixed game, and was on FIRE tonight. Same side, pushing, taking the edge off, and boldly confident to play the lady at the net. Good girl. That's how it should be done!!! No silly cross courts ... oh look, and a cheeky little Andy Murray fist to the opposition on winning a long rally. I'll forgive you that for your Scottish connection. Matt and Charlotte make a great pairing (shave the beard though ... Matt that is!!! ☺)

And then there was us! Of course I have lots of memories of our game, as I was there. I want to write pages and pages of our games. We were awesome!!!, ... but I'll try and limit my ramblings.

I remember my hands shaking as I was serving. I remember Linda knocking the first 4 or 5 shots out in the same place. I remember me smacking with everything I had, a mid court lift ... straight into the net. Both of us sooooo nervous and trying too hard. Both snatching, and desperate not to let each other down, and both so wanting to get some points on the board for the team. I remember little looks. Disappointed little looks saying "sorry", little looks saying with a smile "I know, that's how I feel", and gentle little looks saying "it doesn't matter". I remember Linda playing Hayley at the net, and then time and again pushing mid court to draw Jamie into a lift. I remember her fantastic serving. Nice and tight, Hayley lifts again. Good girl. I remember getting more and more confident, and playing drops and mixing it up, knowing that Linda would leave at the right time, and block and push at the right time. It all clicked. Linda played the perfect mixed game. She was a dream to play with. I of course ran round like a nutter and the last cross court drop shot to win our first match was greeted with a standing ovation. I remember the silence in the points before that. I don't think anyone could believe we were winning. Silence interspersed with the odd, "come on" or clap when they won a point, but mainly silence.



I don't know how to end. As I'm writing, lots of other memories are flooding back. I don't feel I've done the team as individuals justice, and want to write it all again. I want to go on and on about our game and how good we were ... 14-8 up against Stuart Quick and Claire. Hello!!! How good were we!!?

I hope everyone there has those memories and will use them as a positive for next season. I look at the photo of the team, who I all love to bits, and the tacky trophy and this write up and it doesn't do justice to the feelings I have inside. It was only a Knockout Handicap Cup, but it was a hard earned win, and an experience I will remember for a long, long time.