

During the late summer of 43 I was able to unwind as the Camp football activities got under way, although at that time eventful happenings of a disciplinary nature occurred quite frequently in respect of our Compound. Despite this on off pattern the general atmosphere was enlightened by the undoubted attraction of the game of Soccer, a safety valve for all concerned. As this sport played a very important part in our environment the following few pages endeavour to provide an insight of the Stalag sport as I saw it. Lamsdorf was a large camp, but even so the weekly number of soccer matches arranged on a daily basis was very numerous, and, arguably, probably totalled more than any other P.O.W. camp. Apart from the great many who actively participated in the game of soccer there was great interest shown from the spectator angle, more especially in the Senior weekend matches, particularly the International's, which helped immensely to keep everybody in a good frame of mind, and the morale high. Of course all this would not have been possible without the International Red Cross Organisation through whose channels all the necessary sporting equipment was provided through the U.K. i.e. Soccer balls etc. Everything else connected with the presentment of the game was due to the workmanlike ingenuity of the P.O.W.'s themselves. Football boots were adapted from old Army "ammo" boots which were modified in the camp cobblers shop, here they were fitted with leather bars across the soles. Studs, of course, were not used, we had no grass covered pitches, here they were all sand hard soil surfaces abounding with small stones. In the main the various team shirts were vests dyed in different colours, or alternatively Stalag made up sets of shirts. Some sets of football shirts were probably sent out from the U.K., but may have been used strictly for the big International matches. During the latter part of 1943 the camp had two football pitches in action, one of these was full sized being situated in Block 2, which was adjacent to the RAF Compound. This was a new football pitch which was formerly a large open space, how the Germans were talked round to agree to its conversion as a full sized football pitch is a matter for conjecture, nevertheless it happened. The goal posts etc were made, and erected by our own Army P.O.W.'s, fashioned from young trees, and painted white. The nets were artfully formed to be made from yards of Red Cross string or twine.

The other pitch was only of a small size, being the original ground, <sup>It was</sup> situated in Block Ten, and was only suitable for eight a side football.

All soccer matches were played outside the normal winter months, and league programs usually terminated at the end of the month of October, or thereabouts. This, of course, was due to the very severe weather normally encountered during the Silesian winters. On average each team in the respective divisions were scheduled to play at least one match per week, and it must be said that the fixtures, and the scheduling of referees was very well organised under F.A. rules. For the most part no difficulties were experienced, except probably for a period in 44 when balls were in short supply, and so an occasional Barrack league game was abandoned when the ball in use burst due to the hard, pebbly playing surface.

The small eight a side pitch in Block Ten was also very active during the week days. Teams competing were from the Inter Compound League of only one division, The "Arbeiters" League which had three divisions, and the P.O.W. Association League which was comprised of two divisions. The different POW Associations were of course, geographical, being usually counties, and each held their own meetings having a register of players from which teams were selected.



Our new full sized football ground was in regular use most days, matches being scheduled each day throughout the week during the season, which concerned two divisions of the Inter Compound League, but also involved were divisions one and two of the Camp Barrack league. The biggest attractions on this pitch were the week end matches, and these were either Inter Compound First Division games, or special International matches played on Sunday evenings with a normal kick off time of 1800 hours. A high standard of soccer was provided in these International showpieces consequently most of the camp population turned up to watch these games, including many German officers, and other ranks, many of whom were keen Soccer fans. We in the adjoining RAF compound usually had a grandstand view of the big games. Invariably the pitch was completely and thickly surrounded by several thousand spectators so our grandstand view was achieved by bringing out tables from our nearby barrack huts. We would then place them adroitly along a section of the barbed wire which separated us from Block two, thus creating a mini grandstand for at least six or seven of us standing on our own tables. This novel idea rapidly caught on in our compound, and just before kick off during each Sunday evening during the season the entire length of our Compound barbed wire fence was in effect a long mini grandstand of RAF kriegie spectators. These very popular International highlights were scheduled periodically throughout the summer, and comprised of matches between England, Scotland, Wales, and a composite team which was named "The Allies" which was made up of Irish, South Africans, plus one or two other nationalities.

Quite a galaxy of ex-professional players were connected with Lamsdorf, I should think the most popular of these were Jimmy Lavery, Billy Stephens, Harold Roberts, and Reg Allen, all outstanding players. The two most popular R.A.F. players were Tommy Greigs, and Paddy Ratcliffe.

A match I recall very well was the first International match of the 1944 season which was played one Sunday evening before a crowd of several thousand enthusiastic kriegies, and the following teams kicked off at 1800 hours.

ENGLAND;- Rice, Herbert, Blake, Stephens A, Grayley, Varty, Harvey, Lavery (Capt), Stephens W, Roberts, Green.

SCOTLAND;- McKendrick, Meachin, Fox, Kennedy, Sutherland, McLean, McRae, Tearney, Petrie, Stuart, Brodie.

England won this match fairly easily by five goals to one. England's scorers were Varty (2 penalties), W. Stephens 2, and J. Lavery. Scotland's only goal was scored by Kennedy.

Another Soccer special during the month of May 44 was the B.E.F. representative eleven versus The Rest, a match which was also enjoyed by a full house.

B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force 1940) were represented by the following ;-

Rice, Herbert, Black, Lester, Raines, Varty, Harvey, Carroll, Carter, Burns, Crane.

The Rest;- Benet, Taylor, Bisby, Burke, Kennedy, Greigs, Hurlow, Lavery, Stephens W., Roberts, and Green.

This was an excellent game with Benet, in goal for the Rest, outstanding, and a draw of three goals each was a very fair result. Shortly after this game a Stalag selected

Soccer team were permitted by the Germans to visit one of the larger working camps namely E 3 at Bleckhammer, also in Upper Silesia. The object being to play two exhibition matches, one against E3 camp with the other opponents being the Beaux battalion.



Fifteen of the best footballers in the Stalag were selected, and these were McKendrick, Bieby, Black, Herbert, Greggs, Raines, Carroll, Roberts, Davis, Hurlow, Lavery, W. Stephens, Harvey and Green. The selected Lamsdorf eleven won both matches, beating E3 working camp by two goals to nil, Jimmy Lavery scoring both goals, the other match against the Beaux Battalions resulted in a runaway victory of eight goals to four. The Lamsdorf scorers being Lavery 3, Roberts 3, Harvey and Billy Stephens. All these Stalag soccer Internationals I have mentioned many of them with magic in their feet, were artists in their own right, and all were household names to the entire Kriegie population of Stalag 8B, and the larger working camps in the surrounding area, such was their popularity for they entertained thousands.

Having given a birds eye view of the upper crust of Stalag 8B soccer which provided such pleasure for all the inmates AND relieved the tedium of P.O.W. existence I turn now to the many hundreds of other Kriegies, including myself who participated during the week days playing soccer in the camp Barrack Leagues on the full sized pitch. I had always been a keen soccer player before and during my service days, and during my term in 8 B I always looked forward very keenly, and enjoyed my games of soccer. I ran and skippered our barrack team 16 A which was registered as the "Gremlins" F.C. playing in the "A" Division of the Camp barrack league. Both divisions contained sixteen teams in each, and all sorts of nationalities were involved. My outfit the Gremlins were a pretty useful combination Jack McChie being an enterprising centre forward with very good control who scored very regularly, and we had a Canadian inside forward called Hart who was very useful, not many Canadians played soccer he adapted to the game remarkably well. Our team were vests we had dyed ourselves coloured green, and in the late 43 season we finished third in the league. During the year of 44 two seasonal programmes were arranged, the months of May to July, and August to the end of October. During these two sessions we again figured prominently finishing in fifth position, and during the second short season we improved to finish in third place, incidently this was the last played at Lamsdorf. On average I played at least two games per week during the seasons, which was physically possible while we were receiving regular Red Cross parcels, it would not have been otherwise. In addition to playing centre half for my barrack team I also performed in various positions for Northumberland and Durham in the P.O.W. Association league games performed on the small eight a side ground in Block 10, there was not much chance of me going "wire happy" keeping active was the name of the game.

So much for Soccer, during 1944 when camp conditions became much easier a Sports day was arranged, and held on the full sized soccer ground, accordingly all football was cancelled for a few days when the enclosure was used for all manner of athletic events, including an obstacle race, which was one big laugh. The athletics programme was a big success, and was very well organised.

The well organised Soccer programmes, and the additional fillip of the great news from the war fronts, especially the Normandy landings, helped immensely to place everybody's morale on a very high plane after months and years of apathy, boredom and depression. So much for my survey of sport inside Stalag 8 B, Lamsdorf during the time I spent as a guest of the Third Reich, more especially during 1944 when camp conditions were tolerable in direct comparison to earlier days, but the situation would change with the onset of Autumn when our circumstances would rapidly deteriorate, and the final curtain would also fall on Kriegsgefangener sport.



Two other sports ~~xxxx~~ received their baptism during 1944 with the arrival of the appropriate equipment, once again through the auspices of the old firm the Red Cross, what would we have done without them? . A few dartboards and sets of darts saw the introduction of a several barrack matches with teams of eight participating . I was soon involved, ~~xxx~~ myself and seven other mates from our barrack 16 A had quite a good run of successes in matches of 1001 up, but the craze ~~xxxxxxx~~ however did not last very long, and the interest soon began to wane, why, I could never fathom. What was the second sport? Well, let me say that a year previous I would never have believed that I would ever see a serious game of Cricket in a camp with the grim ~~xxxx~~ reputation that Stalag 8 B, Jamsdorf had always possessed, but lo and behold the arrival of cricket gear soon had the organisers in a huddle during the summer months of 44. In no time at all four International teams had been formed namely England, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. For the very first time enthusiasts had the privilege of watching some good competitive cricket on a matting wicket, indeed a rare experience in POW life, especially here. A mini Test series was organised, and the first match arranged involved New Zealand and South Africa when play commenced at 0830 on 3rd July, 1944. The best known player was Billy Wade, who had played prewar Test cricket for South Africa. South Africa won this match by 7 wickets. The scores were New Zealand 119 and 77. South Africa 129 and 68 for three wickets . A few days later England beat Australia easily by an innings, and later in July New Zealand ~~xxxx~~ also beat Australia by 3 wickets. The scores being Australia 159 and 87. New Zealand 167 and 81 for seven wickets. England continued their winning ~~xxxx~~ vein by once again beating Australia by eight wickets. On the 6th September S. Africa and New Zealand met each other once again, and the Kiwis made 123 all out in their first innings, and declared at 137 for seven in their second. South Africa only managed to make 127 first time round, and after New Zealand had made their declaration the ~~Aussies~~ <sup>the Aussies</sup> were set to make 134 runs in two hours of play to win the match . ~~xxxx~~ The South African lads made hard work of this target, and were soon struggling at 22 for 3 wickets, but at this point however Billy Wade arrived at the crease, to demonstrate his class. He soon reached his ~~fifty~~ half century, and when the winning run was despatched Billy had made 56 not out, South Africa had won by 5 wickets. On the 14th Sept, S. Africa beat Australia by one wicket, this match proving to be the most exciting of the series, particularly during the second innings when S. Africa needed 60 runs for victory. At 57 for 9 wickets the last pair at the wicket messrs Laird and Delaney somehow managed to survive to scrape the few necessary runs for victory. Billy Wade ~~xx~~ was again their top scorer with 46 well made runs, and the final scores were Australia 130 and 66 (Culligan 8 for 41 ) South Africa 137 and 60 for 9 ~~xx~~

The final match of the ~~series~~ two months ~~xxxx~~ long series was between the old enemies Australia and England. Having lost the previous two matches the Aussies at last got their revenge winning this one by 5 wickets, with their off spinner Sneddon having a match analysis of 9 wickets for 83 runs. The scores were Australia 127 and 157 for 5 (Ferraro 76) England 126 and 157 .



To ring down the curtain on the first ever cricket series, and the only one, a special match was arranged. This was between a combined Aussie-Kiwi eleven, and an England-Springboks team. The latter team won the toss to bat first, ~~and~~ again Billy Wade showed his better class, and expertise with a fine undefeated 76 not out out of a total of 162. The Aussie/Kiwi eleven managed a tie on first innings also making 162, which left everything to play for in the second innings, and a promise of a good finish. Billy Wade continued his fine form of the first innings to share a fine third wicket stand of 130 runs with our own De Frietas before being dismissed after making 60 valuable runs, De Frietas made 68, and the combine Anglo-Springboks were ~~all out~~ eventually all out for a total of 175. The Aussie/Kiwi combination opened their second innings facing a ~~total of 176 runs~~ a total of 176 runs ~~needed~~ needed to win, with three hours left in which to achieve it. Some fine bowling by Laird and Mergan however put paid to their chances, and the lads from Down Under were bowled out for a total of 145 runs, leaving the combined England/South Africa team the victors by 30 runs, a lovely match for the cricket connoisseurs. The two months four team series of very well contested cricket in Test match fashion was a welcome change, and together with the Soccer programme plus the great news from all the war fronts, especially the Normandy landings helped immensely to place everybody's morale on a very high plane after months and years of apathy, boredom, and depression. So much for my survey of sport in Lamsdorf during my ~~time~~ stint there, especially in 44 when conditions were tolerable in comparison to earlier days, but only until the onset of Autumn 44 when conditions would rapidly deteriorate, and ~~the~~ the final curtain would fall on "Kriegsgefangenschaft" sport.