Girls' 1st XI Tour to Barcelona 2022

05.15am. A time when most self-respecting teenagers are asleep, but not Canford's 1st XI Hockey. An early departure from Canford to Heathrow where our flight would take us to the magnificent city that is Barcelona. Every single one of the girls raring to start their 5-day adventure in the heat of the Spanish sun. But would the hard work bring reward?

On arrival at Hotel Ciudad de Castelldefels, an evening beach walk was much needed to grab some nachos and fries; carbing up, Spanish style. All the girls pitched in to try and communicate with the locals. This became an amusement for the girls as they quickly realised that Spanish perhaps was not their forte. What was their forte was their determination and enthusiasm to win games and get the most out of their time in Barcelona.

Day 2 on the Astro included a physically demanding and humid training session followed by a cable car ride and walk to Plaza Catalunya through Las Ramblas. This was a popular day trip among the girls as many laughs were shared over where exactly Las Ramblas was located. All the girls were rewarded for their hard work in training with unique tasting ice-creams perfectly sourced by our amazing guide, Carolina. Georgie Boon managed to get most of her ice-cream down herself but still greatly enjoyed! What followed was a lovely evening game against Castelldefels. Some superb linking play between the midfields and the forwards allowed for a punchy attack through their defence, Mia Ashby-Rudd also being a brick wall in defence, saving critical shots on goal and Dominique Hudson working alongside Mia to communicate to the team and defending like a trooper. The match was drawn 1-1. Although a whole game was meant to be played, we also ended up playing Trent College, another English touring side for half a match. This was won 1-0 with Maddie Nickell making key tackles and leading into key areas of the pitch and winning a short corner, a powerful injection from Lulu Thompson, trapped effortlessly by Charlie Howell, and a slick pass between Honoré Cutler and Georgie Boon, meant the girls went one up. A celebration like no other was made! All round a successful first day. Mia Ashby-Rudd was awarded Player of the Match, richly deserved for her impressive defence work.

Day 3 started with a training session at the Real Club de Polo de Barcelona. This training session was filled with energy after the previous night's triumphs. After training the girls enjoyed a lovely lunch with lots of traditional Spanish food, the croquettes being a massive hit. The girls really enjoyed their time at the Club including watching polo ponies being exercised. An open bus tour around the city centre to spot all the iconic buildings was culturally enriching, especially Gaudi's unfinished masterpiece, La Sagrada Familia.

Club De Terrassa was the next club to face Canford's finest. Due to busy traffic, there was limited warm up time. As a result of throwback songs being sung at top lung on the way to the match the girls were quick off the mark to score goals. High fives all round as Maya Doubleday scored a hat trick! Smiles all over the girls' faces as they were dominating their opposition. Result, 4-0 win to Canford! 'The time of my life' – Bill Medley, Jennifer Warner - in the changing rooms after the match was a highlight for all. Maya Doubleday achieving Player of the Match for her finesse in front of goal and excellent finishes. Tara Hogan was incredibly positive throughout the whole Tour, always encouraging others and never failing to put a smile on people's faces, as well as scoring an incredible goal!

Day 4 was a day spent relaxing. The sun was shining so rest and recovery was much appreciated. Maddie, Dom and Millie were brave enough to go for a recovery swim in the sea! After a day spent bonding as a team over football on the beach, the final game came around quickly. To hype ourselves up, music was blasted in the bus on route. Even the coaches joining in with familiar tunes (of yore). Canford faced Atlètic Terrassa in the final match of the Tour. Throughout, Portia Carrell, Grace Cecil-Wright and Eliza Miller all demonstrated strength and confidence diving into tackles and striving to go forwards, all of which was demonstrated in buckets in the final game with Tara King making use of her silky hands and fast and direct drives down the wing and Erin doing likewise and scoring a technically difficult goal to score, but scoring with ease. Lulu Thompson forever ensuring we go forwards with impact and Georgie Boon controlling and dominating the middle, connecting well with Honoré Cutler to help support the team attacking. I think we can all say that the highlight of this day was having Charlie Whitmore return to play for the first time since injury. The cheering could be heard for miles when she made her return on Spanish soil. Welcome back Charlie! This game was also won. 5-1 to Canford! A superb way to end the tour. Player of the match was the Captain, for her hat trick in this game.

So you can see, our Spanish Tour dished up a great big paella of a reward, with a day trip to Sitges for some last gasp shopping on day 5 and a tour lunch at Pizza Casanovas with some awards wrapping up an awesome week. Plenty of fun, new friendships, new skills, team work and, yes, the happiest, undefeated set of hockey players to ever grace a Spanish Astro.

On behalf of the team, we want to thank Mr Cronin for his help warming us up and keeping us all smiling with his jokes. Mrs Wilson for her positive energy and support on the side lines. Finally, Mr Collison for organising such an amazing opportunity and support throughout. Other thanks go to our guide and organiser Carolina and the parents that were able to join us in Barcelona. Many thanks to you all!

Honoré Cutler

Captain








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