

## LANCASHIRES WHEELCHAIR RUGBY TOUR OF FRANCE 2007

We joined forces on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2007 with representatives from the Calderdale Yorkshire squad to start our tour of France after a extensive 14 hour coach trip we arrived at our hotel the Leonardo De Vinci around 20 miles outside of Paris which was to be our base for the next few days.

After breakfast on Friday morning it was off to Carpenter a suburb of Paris where along with the Yorkshire team we amalgamated into England and England B .The England B match was the first to kick off this was a match I played in and the pace was frantic from the off we tried to get physical from the start to upset any French rhythm this was a plan that I think worked on the whole with just a few lapses in concentration letting us down. The game was nail-biting right to the end with France B winning 20- 18 with it seemed quite a few debatable decisions from the French officials.

Still nursing the wounds of our narrow defeat it was time to watch the rest of the lads England A against France A. This being the first time I'd played against the French I didn't really know what to expect but as I watched the A game from the bench I was amazed at the high profile the matches held I didn't have time to noticed when playing but there were much bigger crowds filling a massive arena, there was a loud speaker PA system announcing our names in French and English, the game was also being recorded for French TV.

Before the matched kicked off we were introduced to the crowd whilst survivors Eye of the Tiger from Rocky played in the background then it was down to the serious business of the National Anthems. The match was furiously contested and it seemed the intensity had gone up a notch too with the lads trying desperately to settle the score from the earlier match. For long periods the England team seemed to be on top heaping pressure on the French but failing to take chances. Eventually the tide turned in Favour of the French with again some dodgy decisions France A the victors with the score 29-22

After the matches had finished there was just time to get changed and Freshen up then we were off to AXA insurance headquarters in the centre of Paris for a fantastic evening meal.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> day of competition saw us split into Lancashire against Yorkshire for the right to play the winners of the two French Club teams we already have a good Rivalry with Yorkshire but there was also pride at stake a chance to prove once and for all how for we'd progress as a team. Yorkshire unfortunately were the stronger and our defence was woeful we never really got going until it was to the late

We Redeemed ourselves however in our final game for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and fourth place playoff Lancashire against northern France we came out winners with the score 22-18 the try scorers for Lancashire were as follows Martin Norris ( 2 ) Damian McCabe & Adam Rigby With Phil McNamee kicking 3 conversions from 4 attempts the defence in this match was much more resolute with some great attacking moments. Yorkshire went on to win the tournament beating French side Roannas

For me personally the highlights were just being involved with the team and part of a tremendous atmosphere within the whole squad and most definitely the difference in profile within the sport signing autographs for French children is something that I never thought I'd be doing

After the tournament a man of the tournament was chosen by the coach Ian Makinson that was given to Adam Rigby for a strong contribution on pitch as well as good attitude and discipline off it too

Well done Adam and well done the rest of the team

Shaun Fallows

Wigan and District, Lancashire & GB wheelchair Rugby League