



CANADA TOUR - JUNE 2007

It was felt by the Senior team management that after 3 Twickenham Finals in 4 years, with 2 wins giving Lancashire a record breaking 18 County Championships and this being the 125th Anniversary of the County, then the players, who had contributed magnificently to these achievements had earned some form of celebratory recognition.

Lancashire had not toured at any level since 1991 (unless you call our 2 night stay semi-final visit to Cornwall in 2003 a tour!). The players were sounded out and knowing they had to make a personal financial contribution we had a very positive response. One must remember that in this current semi-professional era, players start training in early July, followed by an intensive programme of league and cup rugby from September to the end of April and then commit to Lancashire for a further 4-5 weeks and their material reward is a few items of 'stash'. However, we know that their major satisfaction comes from the pride and joy playing for Lancashire!

Having gained the player's commitment - although some regulars were forced decline for work or family reasons and a couple felt they desperately needed a physical break - we enquired about suitable destinations and finally settled for a 12 day, 3 match tour to eastern Canada in the shape of St John's Newfoundland and Toronto.

The Executive Committee was approached to discuss, in principle, the concept of a tour and how it could be financed. The initial reaction was hardly encouraging - firstly we had just ended our sponsorship deal with Thwaites and the purpose and benefits of such a project was brought into question. We had already established the likely cost at around £1,000 per head and looked for all the playing/coaching group to contribute £250 with management and supporters paying the full amount. The County did have a reserve sum being the excess from earlier tours along with a spontaneous raffle at the 2006 Awards Dinner.

A significant donation was made by Holiday Inns of the Intercontinental Hotels Group and, in addition they offered very generous room discounts and free breakfasts during the Toronto leg. Without this valuable funding we could not have proceeded. Our hosts in NL, The Rock, hosted the playing party for 4 nights in the local University - again a wonderful gesture. Lancashire kindly loaned us the deposit required to secure our flight reservations until such time as the varying individual contributions were forthcoming. Former Fylde and Lancashire player, Steve Rigby, was our official travel agent and his offer to accompany us as Tour Admin Manager - at his own expense - was gratefully accepted.

We approached the Youth Trust Fund suggesting that they finance a couple of youngsters from our current Under 20's squad - they agreed - and suggestions were submitted by their coaches. Varying fund raising initiatives were set in motion - appeals to Members and Business Houses, Raffle at the 125th Anniversary Dinner Dance, Golf Day, Sportsman's Dinners etc.

To everybody who contributed or donated in any shape or form we are extremely grateful, as indeed are Lancashire. On behalf of the entire touring party may we say a sincere thank you to each and every one of you.

The tour was a huge success, both on and off the field. The appreciation of the players to Lancashire and their ongoing commitment to County rugby will serve us well. The Tour was more or less free of any serious drama although we had a 'sprung' shoulder in the first game which put our limited playing resource under a little undue strain. Otherwise, apart from a lost passport and a senior official not knowing his lbs, from his kgs. all went well. We firmly believe that the values of touring, although not quantifiable - in finite terms, are immense and our Finance and Funding Committee are looking to plan future tours at varying age levels.

We now leave it to our Head Coach, Mark Nelson to summarise the playing aspects of the venture.

MAURICE PARKER, DON WELSH and ERNIE NEELY

PS. Sorry we were not able to submit this report to the 2007 AGM. However, you'll hopefully appreciate that we only returned to Ringway at breakfast time Monday, prior to the meeting on Wednesday evening!

COACHING REPORT LANCASHIRE TOUR CANADA 2007

Following the Cup Final at Twickenham attention turned to the tour of Canada. The prospect of the tour had certainly galvanised the squad throughout the championship and though we didn't play at our best it was no disgrace to lose to a very good Devon team.

Upon arrival in St Johns we got down to work quickly and staged three very positive training sessions which set us in good stead for the forthcoming games. The first match against Newfoundland Rock was a very physical encounter the 'Rock' contained a number of internationals, not least Rod Snow who is a veteran of 3 World Cups. Lancashire gave as good as they got and ultimately our superior pace and skill won the day after a very attritional battle. The home side were shocked to lose, indeed this was the first defeat inflicted on the islanders for 3 years.

We moved to Toronto next and played against a less physical but more pacy outfit, Niagara Thunder. In another close game we took the spoils with the majority of this squad taking part in the match which was allowed, due to the rolling sub-system adopted for this game.

It was a great experience for the players to encounter differing approaches to Rugby by the Rock and Thunder and to come out on top in both matches was a great credit to the squad.

In the final game against Toronto Xtreme we were faced with a composite side which we interpreted as being probably our strongest opposition. Therefore we started with the best team possible. In the event we demolished them and by halftone the game was well and truly won, and by the end we had crossed the 70 point mark.

Three games gave us the chance to introduce young players like Sam Beaumont and Dan Waller to Senior County Rugby, whilst relying on the more experienced members of the championship side to demonstrate the quality of Lancashire Rugby to the Canadian Rugby fraternity who were all impressed with the quality we produced.

I remained convinced that touring with a quality team against strong opposition in the different culture remains an integral part of the game. Our tour bore testament to this, every one of the players and officials will find their experience of rugby greatly enhanced and the camaraderie that developed will have lasting ties throughout everyone's involvement in the game.

I sincerely hope future tours will be arranged and the tour party gets as much out of these ventures as we did. In closing it would be remiss of me not to single out one person for special thanks, indeed without his Stirling efforts it would not have been possible, Maurice Parker... CHEERS

MARK NELSON

Lancashire Head Coach

CANADA TOUR 2007

Players

Chris Briers
Roger Banks
Paul Bailey
Sam Beaumont
Matt Collie
Jason Duffy
Petrus du Plessis
Nick Flynn
Neil Hunter
Neil Kerfoot
Jan Lourens
Dave McCormack (Captain)
Steve Nutt
Martin O'Keefe
Dan Palmer
Chris Planchant
Henry Platt
Freeman Payne
Gareth Rawlings
Nick Royle
Dan Waller
Dave Wilks
Darren Wilson
Dave Wiseman
Steve Williams
Alan Yates

Management

Steve Rigby
Don Welsh
Maurice Parker
Ernie Neely

Coaching/Medical

Mark Nelson
Martin Scott
Helen Pennington
Roly Heptonstall
John Greenwood

Supporters

Geoff Heptonstall
Tony Lofthouse
Paul Hegginsbotham