

REME TENNIS VS EDINBURGH ALL STARS – 05 MAY 15

by Cfn K. Padgett

On Tuesday 5th May the REME tennis team took a 4 man squad comprising of Capt Russ Lewis, SSgt Andy Bickerton, Cpl Sim Simanjuntak and Cfn Keith Padgett to Edinburgh for their annual match against The Edinburgh All Stars at the Craig Lockhart Scottish tennis centre.

We departed Gatwick Airport just after mid-day in the knowledge we had a long training session ahead of us that evening. As we touched down in Scotland we were greeted with the most traditional of Scottish welcomes, thick dark cloud and rain.

Luckily for us we had an ace up our sleeve in Lt Col (Ret'd) Jagger, previous REME tennis Chairman, who after inspecting the tennis courts at Craiggiehall (Army HQ Scotland) decided the courts were unplayable.. We cut our losses and instead he took us to an Edinburgh steak house for a lovely meal and a run down of REME tennis success since he left. The REME tennis squad currently holds three of the four Army tennis trophies, and are in contention for the fourth - the Army summer league title.



The following morning we made the short trip to the Craiglockhart tennis centre. The format for the match was REME vs Edinburgh All Stars with a Masters doubles match being played alongside representing both teams. Last year saw the REME team comfortable win the fixture and this year the Edinburgh manager took no chance pulling together a very strong team consisting professional tennis coaches. After a brief warm up it was clear for all to see that the REME had a tough task ahead, the young lads from Edinburgh University were of a very high standard and they had come to win.

On court 1 the REME pair of Cfn Padgett and Cpl Simanjuntak played the All Stars first pair in the opening game of doubles. The opening set went past quite quickly with the All Stars pulling no punches and taking the first set 6-1. Having seen the relentless standard of their opposition the REME pair got stuck in playing some incredible tennis and led the second set 6-5 before the All Stars leveled to take it to a tiebreak. Unfortunately the All Stars proved too strong and won the tiebreak to win the match 2-0.

On court 2 Capt Lewis and SSgt Bickerton had an equally hard task in their opening match with the Edinburgh men once again playing some outstanding tennis. The first set was a close fought affair with each pair struggling to win their service games, in particular the REME tennis captain SSgt Andy Bickerton. Luckily for us we had Capt Lewis on top form and the REME secured the first set 7-5 thanks to some strong net play. After such a tight first set everyone expected another gruelling

battle to take place for the second set but no one could have expected what was to follow. SSgt Bickerton and Capt Lewis played some outstanding tennis to break serve on the opening game and the momentum seemed to have swung in the REME's favour, but the young All Stars rallied. They won the next 6 games in a row with some inspired tennis and great determination to give their team 3 sets to 1 lead at the half way point.

As the 3rd and 4th matches got underway the REME lads knew they had a mammoth task ahead of them and with time now also becoming an issue both pairs were under pressure to get games on the board early. On court 2 Cfn Padgett and Cpl Simanjuntak needed to secure both sets to give the REME a chance of winning the tie and they got off to a dream start taking a 2-0 lead. With the All Stars backs against the wall they dug deep producing some of the best tennis of the day. Over the next 10 games the two sides had some unbelievable rallies and the scores were level at 6-6. Tiebreak! At this point both sides agreed that with time being a common enemy it would be best to play a tiebreak to 10 points instead of the normal 7. This would decide both sets so the pressure was on. It was clear to see the REME men had learnt their lesson from the previous tiebreak in the first match and romped to a 5-0 lead. Try as they might the All Stars just couldn't close the deficit and the REME pair won the tiebreak 10-7.

The comeback was on. On court 1 SSgt Bickerton and Capt Lewis also started strong playing some sublime shots and winning some key rallies to take a well deserved 2-0 lead. The next game however turned out to be the pivotal point in the set. At 0-40 down in the third game the All Stars were looking shaky. The REME pair had played some outstanding tennis with SSgt Bickerton placing some key volleys just out of reach and Capt Lewis hitting some big forehand shots from the baseline. The All Stars however lived up to their name and ruthlessly fought back to win the game with some first class serves. This fight back seemed to halt the REME pair in their tracks and with the clock running down the All Stars pushed hard. Despite the REME pair playing their best the All Stars were just too strong and took the first set 6-2. The second set began in a similar manner as the first, with REME pair not dropping a single point on their way to a 2-0 lead. The determined youngsters once again produced a vast array of brilliant shots to get a game on the board but unfortunately for them time was up.

The fate of the match rested on the result of the Masters doubles, had Lt Col Jagger done enough to give the REME the victory for the second year running. Unfortunately the Edinburgh Masters had produced their own master class and using their years of experience had cunningly dispatched the REME pair winning both matches. After a quick count of the scores there was no doubt as to who had won the tie this year. A well deserved victory went to the Edinburgh All Stars.

"Credit must go to the All Stars this year" said Lt Col Jagger "They have come out fighting and played without question some brilliant tennis across all 3 courts. Once again every match was contested in a fierce but friendly manner which is what we have come to expect. Your hospitality as always has been first class and we look forward to next year when we will be back to try and get the REME's name on the trophy once more"

The Edinburgh All Stars – winning team



Runners Up



A brilliant days tennis was had by all and a big thank you to Lt Col Jagger and his team for all their hard work in organising the match. A special thanks to the guys from Edinburgh University who took time out of studying to play and to the Craiglockhart Tennis Centre for hosting the match.