

XL Tour to Spain - 1999

by Ken Medlock

On October 26 a party of 36 under Gordon Potter's leadership went to Alicante for a ten day cricket tour and although only four matches could be arranged, all played on Sporting Alfas ground, situated in L'Alfas Del Pi, it was a great success and will, I am sure, result in further visits to this location.

Two of the matches were played against the Forty Club of Spain and the other two against Sporting Alfas Cricket Club. The municipally owned ground is situated in the centre of a high quality development and is quite unique in that it serves as a golf driving range up to noon each day and is available for cricket the remainder of the day. It has a good artificial wicket although the mat is rather narrow and they intend to replace it with a wider strip as soon as possible.

We understand the local authority is keen to improve the cricket facilities by levelling out the outfield and with the enthusiasm and dedication we witnessed from the club members the improvements will not be long delayed.

The first match was against the Forty Club of Spain played on a 'time' basis and XL, put into bat, scored 196-7 in 58 overs. Andy Meads, 66, and Robbie Barker, 53, produced an opening stand of 89. Against a younger home side and on an outfield of tough grass of above normal length it was difficult to score quickly, well demonstrated by Andy's 38 overs for his 66. The home side passed this total for the loss of eight wickets in only 49 overs.

The second match was a 40 over game against Sporting Alfas Cricket Club. The home side batted first and although Peter Wharton took a wicket with his first ball the next wicket fell at 181! Facing a total of 212-4 our openers Andy Meads and Ron Helyar gave XL a steady start of 47 off 11 overs and although there was a fifth wicket stand of 76 by Adrian Gale, 53 not out, and Martin Abbott, 18 not out, the innings ended on 171 for 5, a loss by 41 runs.

The third match was also against Sporting Alfas with XL declaring at 160-7, thanks to a brisk 57 not out from Ron Helyar supported by Chris Hutton, 20. Robbie Barker who opened scored 34. The home side were cruising to an easy victory until Mike Wicks and Barry Hunter each took four wickets and with three overs still to be bowled the home side were 138-9. They were, however, able to save the game, ending on 139-9. Congratulations are due to Mike Wicks for passing 400 wickets whilst playing for the XL Club. Well done Mike!

Our last match was against the Forty Club of Spain and we scored 190 runs thanks to a steady 57 from Clive Huggins and 34 from Chris Hutton. The home side overtook this total for the loss of only four wickets with two overs still available. So the final result was played 4, drawn 1, lost 3 but it must be said we were playing a much younger side on a ground where the running of quick singles was vital.

Our tour Chairman received considerable assistance from Clive Woodbridge, Director of Cricket at Sporting Alfas and the tour ended with a dinner and dance organised by the Sporting Alfas Cricket Club at which we were able to express thanks to the home side for their welcome, particularly the Chairman and Clive Woodbridge. The home team responded by inviting us to visit against next year and nominated Ron Helyar as the player of the XL Club party.

I was also able to carry out our usual 'fines' routine and £84 was raised for the Primary Club.

Finally a sincere word of thanks to our hard working efficient leader Gordon Potter for a well organised short tour, to our players for their grit and determination in facing powerful opposition and our supporters for their encouragement.