

## London Petanque Crystal Place event 8<sup>th</sup> June 2018



A 5 hour journey (thank goodness for the Senior Railcard) ended at a travelodge in Penge near Croydon. A 358 bus up the road to the park and we were there. (Metro cards work in London).

We found the event location on Friday and had a practice with Baz Wing until it rained. It was a bit empty but it filled with lane strings, food vans and stall holders the following morning... And 500 players and supporters.

Back to the hotel and a visit to the Goldsmiths Arms for refreshment.

Up early the next day and at the venue for 0815. The crowds were building up. The games started about 10am.

First game we were hoping for a team of international superstars and we got Dag and Simon and Steve. 3 good players who both shot and pointed well and although we played well they played better. Travelled all the way from Yorkshire but met a team mostly from Yorkshire. No pictures exist of this game. Lost 6-13. Dag & his team made it to Gold Knockout but lost in the first round.

Game 2 and we were hoping for an international team of superstars and we got Ross, Dave & Jack from Clapham Junction who'd been playing for 3 months.

They had one set of leisure boules between them and didn't know many rules. It was all a bit of a shock to them.

Nice enough guys tho' but... Won 13-4.



Game 3 was a barrage round for place in either silver or bronze KO. Playing a team of French giants. 6 ft 5, 6 ft 7 & 6 ft 8. They were a family who came from a village in the Dordogne and I asked them when we met how they had grown so tall. The answer was "Eating Duck and truffles".

Lots of luck and bad bounces all round but lost 7-13. I still remember with startling clarity throwing the coche to 10m exactly, pointing right onto it and being shot out by one of the giants. They shot a lot & were beatable but we didn't make it.

This is my photo of the tournament. I know Roy is short and Brendan isn't tall but what a photo.

We didn't make the Silver Knockout and had to make do with the Bronze round of 32 in the KO.

Played Cobham Petanque club in the first round of the knockout. Nice guys about the same level as us but we played poorly and the result was Huddersfield 4 The Terrain 13. Time to watch the rest of the day. Saw Dylan Rocher play and other top international players. Watched a fascinating shooting competition. Met some friends and put some faces to facebook names.

Random thoughts about the event.

1. The terrain is big. 128 teams but could probably take more.
2. It's rough with stones up to 40mm and concrete in places and large craters. A lot different to what we normally play on. However the best players tended to win.
3. You enter knowing there will be very good players there but almost all the top players in England were there and many from the continent. The standard was very high.
4. There weren't enough chairs. This was a problem. Although it was made clear that BYO was the best option the only place to sit was on the stone steps and there were plenty of those and they were handy for watching big matches on the show court. But some of my team couldn't sit down for the simple reason they didn't think that they would be able to stand up again – stone steps being quite close to the ground.
5. Raffle; There was one and it was £5 for 3 tickets and there were fabulous prizes on offer. This was clearly our best chance of winning something but after the selling process the prize giving was rather lost among the general excitement. No shouting out of numbers and no announcement over the PA. We asked many times but no-one could tell us. Eventually found a table where some of the announced prizes were displayed with winning tickets attached to them. By the time we found this table there were few left. The rest presumably had been collected by winners.

Best quote from a fellow player.

"You're not playing the opposition. You're playing the terrain". So so True.

Overall a great experience. We should congratulate London Pétanque Club and its army of volunteers on organising and running a very complex event in a thoroughly professional way. Hours and hours of hard work must have gone into the planning, preparation and delivering the competition. Well done guys!

We entered expecting to not reach the top half of the table but probably ended around 90<sup>th</sup> place. Better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick but...

Do it again next year? Opinions differ. There's only so far a team of pensioners who've been playing for 5 years can go. It's a young person's game at the top level.

Could we do such an event in the North?