

## Goodwood Roos Tour of Thailand

(Well if one game constitutes a tour), July 14<sup>th</sup> 2014

The story starts with the fact Lloyd Cook is actually getting married in Thailand on the island of Koh Samui. After we had had a cricket tour of the UK the previous year, we joked that since many of the guests that were going were cricketers, wouldn't it be great to have a game of cricket over there.

Now, on an island in Thailand with a population of only around 60,000, that was pretty much unlikely. Hey, it was probably unlikely anyone on the island even knew what cricket was! So we looked into a stopover in Singapore and play at the Singapore Cricket Club, which sitting in the middle of Singapore city, surrounded by high rise would have been a spectacular place to play, but logistically getting everyone there on the same day was problematic. Ironically, we actually played a touring side from Singapore Cricket Club in the UK the year before when we teamed up with Goodwood UK, to defeat them in a friendly at Stirlands, Chichester. So we had an invite from them to come and play anyhow. No, that was not an option (although we will play there one day), so the idea went on to the back burner.

There is certainly no organized cricket competition on the island....or so we thought. I managed to come across a Facebook thread with some guys talking about cricket. This was at least assurance that someone on the island had least heard of the game. After a bit of back and forth and a big language barrier, we exchanged contacts and agreed to meet up when we arrived on the island. I still did not know if we had a game, where it would be played or even if they had any equipment.

We arrived in Koh Samui a few days early to enjoy the resort, on the most horrific airplane ride you could imagine. Many of the group were on this flight and we all thought we were about to die. When we finally landed at the beautiful airport, the pilots were whistling Dixie, apparently the tropical winds are quiet common, we were all kissing the tarmac and already worrying about the flight home.....there is another story.

Now I don't speak Thai, or Indian and my contact on the island did not speak great English, but somehow on the phone we swapped the address of the resort we were staying at and he arrived an hour later to set up the game. He was captain of one of two sides that played cricket in Koh Samui. One was a group of Indians and the other a group of Bangladeshis. We agreed that a game should go ahead, they had all the equipment, a ground was available, they even had a turf wicket apparently, I could not believe it we were actually going to be playing a game on the island.

One catch was that due to their work commitments, the only time slot was a 7am start on the Sunday morning of Lloyds wedding! I thought; we are going to have to do some fast

talking here. I told Lloyd who passed this information on to his wife to be Sue, who to my surprise was in support of the game, so we were on.

Everyone met in the foyer at 6am, an amazing feat in itself, especially for Noddy Giddings, who, had spent the previous days, getting blind drunk with some random German guy until 4am one night and then we would not see him the entire next day, that cycle repeated itself for the whole trip, it must have been an on day for Noddy.

We hired a bus and headed off to the meeting place, an address on the other side of the island. Now you have to leave early in Adelaide for an away game at Trinity, but I am not sure I have ever left for a game of cricket at 6am. As we left, the rain started, I hoped they had put covers on the wicket.

We arrived half an hour later to a Tailor shop with the front door wide open. With no one in sight I peeked in the door and saw a bloke asleep on a couch. Not sure what to do, I knocked on the door and the guy woke up. It was not the bloke I had met, but he seemed to know who I was and thankfully his English was pretty good. He was dressed in a 20/20 cricket style top, light blue with "Hussain" written across the back of it.

"We are here for a cricket game." A big smile came across his face and he lept to his feet, follow me to the "stadium". He climbed on his motor bike and we loaded back in the bus, the rain was still coming down, but it did not seem to bother Hussain. As we sped through the streets, we could see him frantically ringing all his mates. He negotiated the slippery streets with phone in one hand and keeping control of the moped with the other.

We arrived at "Chaewang Stadium" a few minutes later. As we climbed out of the bus and onto what was by now a mud pit after a fair bit of rain. It looked like a dirt soccer field, with just glimpses of grass, but now had pools of water all over it and the red dirt stuck to your shoes, there was no cricket happening today, we had all got up early for nothing.

Huusain seemed unphased, follow me he said, we are off to Chaewang Stadium 2, it holds the water much better. Back on his bike and off we went, Hussain still continued to contact his players on the phone as he navigated the slippery streets.

Our side was getting increasingly anxious. I could feel that the group was starting to split. We had missed the all you can eat breakfast and I could feel that some of the side was considering a mercy dash back to the comfort of fake bacon, pancakes and pino coladas. As we pulled into Chaewang Stadium 2 it was fairly clear why this ground was rated the second in the competition.

As we climbed out of the bus we were confronted what can only be described as a rubbish dump covered in sand. It was flat, but covered in water buffalo shit, with heaps of rubbish, broken bottles asbestos and pools of water containing who knows what. Hussain seemed

excited as with the sand base of the ground it was draining quickly, it was raised so the water did seem to be draining to the thick grassland that surrounding the stadium.

By now I had lost almost all the team. It was like we were four nil down in an Indian test tour, we all had dysentery and we could not wait to get home. It took all my negotiating powers to get the side not to get back on the bus and head back to the western comforts of the resort. We needed to show some respect to the locals, they had gone to some effort and the few guys that had turned up buy now, all in the same light blue shirt at Hussain, were really looking forward to the fixture, but our side was flailing.

I met with the players that had arrived in the middle of the rubbish tip and we agreed to a small clearing amongst the rubbish and puddles would be the pitch. Stumps were put in the ground and the game was to go ahead, a 20/20 fixture. As I went back to the changing rooms (who's kidding there was no changing rooms, just a small shrine, we were not going to get changed out of shorts and thongs anyhow) I let the team know of the nuances of the rules (basically they made them up as they went along). Lloyd, the captain for the day went to toss the coin and we found ourselves in the field, which was not such a bad thing as we could sum up the local conditions.

There was immediate controversy as umpire W.Potts gave a thin edge through to Dylan Turner, not out. Dylan lost his shit as intercountry relations took a nose dive. The umpire settled the situation and Koh Samui started to score freely, including a few byes, through the keepers legs into the long grass behind.

Now this was before the major ball tampering controversy of the Aussies in 2018, but as the locals taped up a tennis ball, I could not help but think that these guys were taking it a lot more serious than us.

As we scrolled through the bowlers, we started to make headway through the batting line up of the locals, which was morphing minute by minute as more of their players rocked up. Jon Giddings, after a strong performance in England the year before was unplayable, Woodroffe, Martin, White and Cook also bowled well, they only got hold of Scroopy and Robbo bowled absolute horse shit.

We spent the overs dodging the pools of cholera, tip toeing around the broken glass and retrieving balls from the waist high grass that surrounded the ground, we had to find the ball as we only had one. I got a little nervous as the day before we had seen a cobra show, and my mate I was looking for the ball with could not confirm or deny if the snakes lived in these areas.

The footmarks were getting greasy, The Pom Woodroffe luckily the only one ending up on his arse, covered in mud. We dismissed the local side, they failed to face out their overs, scoring only 76 and it looked as though we were in the box seat.

No morning tea was supplied, so we were straight back into the game, these guys had to go to work by 10am anyhow!

Lloyd and Dylan Turner opened the innings and got us off to a fantastic start. The groom got to face the first ball from Hussain, he seemed their gun player as he opened the batting and bowling and organized all the games. By now the tennis ball was pretty wet and hard. The first ball, Hussain came charging in off a 20 metre run up, his front foot slipped and he sent down a pretty decently fast head high beamer. We all had visions of delivering Lloyd back to his wedding with one of his eyes closed over, but luckily Lloyd got a glove to it and avoided any catastrophe.

Slow early, then building the innings, scoring all around the rubbish tip the opening partnership got us to 45 for the first wicket. We seemed to be cruising, but then a mix up between Scroopy and Dags triggered a batting collapse.

Panic set through the batting line up as normally calm batters hurried to get their gear on (who am I kidding there was no gear only one bat, a ball with tape on it and a pair of wicket keeping gloves). As the wickets continued to tumble, we just could not seem to arrest the momentum back. Whitey was left ruing what could have been at the non-strikers end as his partners fell one by one to the skilled local bowlers. Hussain told me later that the Chaewang Stadium 2 was a bowler's wicket, whereas the number one stadium favours the batters, this probably explains the low scores.

As we lost our last wicket, the locals celebrated like they had just won the Border Gavaskar Trophy. Just for a moment we could see, to them it was like beating the Aussies, in Kolkata at Eden Gardens and it all made sense, today, we had made 11 blokes very happy. I was never so happy to lose a game in my life.

We had group photos and left Chaewang Stadium 2 with amazing memories of what was the most unusual and rewarding mornings of cricket of our lives. Only a couple of hours earlier we could not see it, but we now have sensational stories of the day we played for Australia versus India in the World Cup 20/20 final in, Eden Gardens, Kolkata on July 14<sup>th</sup> 2014 at 7am. You won't find it in the record books, but you will find it in the memories of those 11 players from Koh Samui, Thailand, however they got there and in the hearts of all the blokes from Goodwood that participated. What a way to remember the day.

Oh yeh, Lloyd and Sue also had a really nice wedding on the beach that evening, with food and fireworks, it was awesome!

**World Cup 20/20 Grand Final**

**July 14<sup>th</sup> 2014 Chaewang Stadium 2**

**India all out 75**

**Defeated**

**Australia all out 62**

**Goodwood Australia 11 (Australia)**

Lloyd Cook

Dylan Turner

Warwick Potts

Scott Woodroffe

Jason Scroop

Mark White

Simon Robinson

Jon Giddings

Darren Martin

Joel Cook

Bernard Tomic

Bernard Tomics' dad

**Koh Samui 11 (India)**

Hussain

And 10 other blokes