

SUAC would dominate the field at BUCS Outdoors once again, taking 1/10 of the entire field of competitors this year.

We managed to find enough minibus drivers for everyone to be able to go to BUCS, though there was always a risk that something was liable to go wrong. This meant that although Matt Leivers was scheduled to pick up some of the equipment beforehand, Chris Skipper ended up driving as a backup. As it turned out, Matt arrived on time and would have been available!

Minibus loading took its usual age to sort itself out, while Sara Rubio turned up merely to collect money off of everyone (and wish us good luck, of course). In the time that it took to load the buses, Stephen Fawcett would have been able to return home and pick up the chair that he had once again forgotten to bring with him. For various reasons like being the advertised annual 'Fun Bus' and friendship circles, most people wanted to get on the same bus as each other. The final seat was Eleanor Dodd (who was coming to watch), pointing out that she needed to sit at the front because she gets travel sickness. This meant that there were too many people for one bus, and Stephen, Fiona Walsh and Andrew Howe found themselves kicked off on to the other bus. There was a joke on the other bus about if it was an excuse and how travel sick Ellie would really get, but it's probably safest to not put that one to the test. Stephen actually ended up in the front of the other bus anyway, but fortunately since Chris had driven to BUCS several times before, Stephen's navigational skills (or lack thereof) would not be required. The second bus turned into the 'Lads' bus, of course with the token female in Fiona (re. BUTC bus), and probably had just as much fun anyway.

At the stop off for food, the word was that Janna Collier had been telling off her co-driver Matt for giving rubbish directions to the supermarket. Meanwhile, Fiona had got out her copy of 'Glamour' magazine, which contained the usual sort of content that proves eye-watering for the men on the bus. Though not comparable to the 'Cosmo' so traditionally brought to BUCS competitions by Rachael Evans (who was also coming to watch via the other bus), the highlight was probably the article written by a 'sexologist' – which is apparently a legitimate job title. At the services, we maintained tradition by getting the novices to get in to the children's playpen.

Although there was the risk of heavy rain during the weekend, we found ourselves camping on the main field, where we opted to not park all the way down the far end of the field this time, instead choosing somewhere nearer the entrance by a lonely Danage boss that was 'reserved for the cleaners' to shoot at. Putting up the tents was in some ways more efficient than previous years, in that we knew which poles went where and how many tents we were going to put up. Clearly, we've become immunised to archery innuendo through overexposure, so we resorted to innuendo for sorting out the minibus and climbing through all the equipment. Phrases included "Oh, just get it up," and "I can't get my leg over," (both Janna) and there were dubious sounding squeaking noises and heavy breathing from people trying to inflate their camping beds. In other ways, setting things up was a little inefficient in that there were several people waiting to be able to unload buses when they weren't all needed to set up tents, since it wasn't the time to do that yet. In the end, some people took matters into their own hands and started unloading the bags anyway, which speeded up proceedings considerably.

There was also an element of confusion about which tents would be housing who, who would get to have a couples tent, and whether we would be split by gender (which we were) or whether we were

not really fussed about it (which was also the case). Eventually people started claiming pods and the situation resolved itself out.

We went to the same pub as we always do for the Friday night meal, although we opted to not take the country path shortcut from last year which made the trip less eventful, and Luis Felipe Paulinyi opted to use the time to do some practice shooting, eating his own food. The food service was improved on last year in that we were each asked for our names so that we could all receive our food more efficiently. However, in a running Mitchell and Webb joke, Liam McDonnell ordered his food as 'Digby', and Andrew Howe as 'Ginger'. The bar lady remarked that Andrew didn't look particularly ginger... Janna also has one of those weird names that people have a habit of getting wrong so she settled for ordering her food as 'Janet'. Janna had a moment of panic when she pointed out that she couldn't find her archery bag, prompting a small search party to go back to the minibuses to check that nothing stupid had happened and the bag was really there. It turned out to be wedged behind the back seat, and the crisis was averted.

Declan Ashworth was content with his 32 ounce steak, while Fiona was having issues with how to use cutlery. It was noticeable that we weren't sat in the 'adult' section, and we seemed to have been sat next to a group of children who started throwing paper aeroplanes around. A few came in our general direction, which caused us to join in ourselves, though Janna was not impressed by the one that hit her, as demonstrated by the lack of maternal sympathy privately expressed to those on her table.

We located the facilities to clean ourselves up on the campsite so that we could get an early night, though Rachel Jones (also here to watch) bizarrely decided to personally tell Stephen that it was "time to go to bed", which sounded like an unusual statement/proposition to make, but was of course entirely innocent. Some of us got more sleep than others, though at least the weather was warmer than previous years, and most of us got up early to be able to eat, set up our bows and register happily. Some got up even earlier to set up the tents on the shooting line. The decision to not set them up the night before was justified as a number of tents and targets had blown over in the night. Fortunately the equipment inspection was less severe than last year, as the judges walked past everyone rather than us all having to go to the judges. David 'Boris' Williams had his bow checked twice after someone joked that he had changed his setup immediately after getting it inspected. While it was legal both times, it provided an opportunity for the judges to bemoan the accuracy of bow scales.

For all the preparation that we give to the novices during the season, it is ultimately up to the individual to look after themselves, particularly at this stage of the year. It is especially the case at outdoor competitions, where the novices are at one end of the field, and the seniors are at the other – this year right at the opposite end. Ruth Walton, as our single senior female, was kept company by our non-shooting members. The novices somehow contrived to make a number of errors, prompting Boris to say that next year he won't shoot as someone will have to be there to stop the novices from doing all these silly things. Jamie Parkin's riser has two holes for his button, but he tried to force his button into the wrong hole, which took his rest off his bow. Fortunately the rest was sticky enough to be put back on to the bow. Then, when it was time to shoot, Dominic Collis decided he didn't need to use all of the practice time available, choosing to not shoot the first end since he thought the details were the other way round. He's now been sent off to Australia for the

next half year, so you can make your own Antipodean joke. Janna started shooting without her fingersling on, though curiously the bow didn't fall out of her hand... this was not the same fate of someone else nearby who did the same and had to sheepishly retrieve their bow. Also, Andrew would go on to break someone else's arrow by accidentally walking on it.

In terms of the actual shooting, there weren't many stoppages for equipment failures, but there were a surprising number of bouncers. Ruth was surprised to find herself on the SUAC team after the first distance with 185, though she couldn't maintain her unexpected form in the other distances. Boris was having fun with Liam McDonnell and the people from Surrey at the far end of the shooting line, while on the senior gents recurve, only Luis, Simon King and Stephen could say they were happy with how things were going, and by the half way stage, it was those three and Chris who formed the team. Some of us were ok to know how well we were doing, while some preferred to not know. Of course, the people that knew their own results knew everyone else's, but did well to keep quiet. In saying that, Luis, Andrew and James Nelson were leading their categories, all three principally by their ability to shoot 70 metres. Rachael was on hand to make tea for everyone as the weather started to darken, though someone had neglected to buy sugar for the weekend.

At the start of the third distance, the rain started to fall, though they were passing showers as predicted. Because of how long it takes to shoot a detail and collect arrows there were cases when the rain came and passed again before the next turn to shoot. However, this didn't stop the targets from starting to fall apart. Apparently the official line from the judges is that waterproof targets are expensive and it's also better to use reinforced targets. By this point, most of the SUAC positions had been decided, with only a few small changes in the positions occurring. There were retirements for Kate Brookes and Theo Chen-Sverre, who found themselves unable to keep shooting properly for the full round without the risk of getting hurt.

At the 30m point there was a small incident at the start, as the person shooting on the same detail as Stephen missed his end as he was in the toilet. It was a bit disconcerting to go to the line and wonder why nobody was around though. The extravagant follow through from one of his club team mates had already caused someone else to choose to take down their scope from the line in case it got hit by the longrod. Stephen was using the opportunity to talk to people from the other teams, as he tends to do, especially since he was shooting near other regional league coordinators.

The standard Matt Potticary equipment failure happened, as this time his sight broke – somehow the actual scoping bit had managed to snap. There was also an incident in which Scarlett Theron Rush managed to shoot her third arrow after the buzzer which meant she lost her highest scoring arrow, a 10, which she was rather upset about. When news broke to the senior end of the field via Rachael being the messenger, there was a brief discussion about what to do and who should go and see her. The discussion definitely involved the issue of trying to console an upset woman, which caused certain senior gents to choose to back off from the responsibility. Stephen decided that as a fairly respected senior member of the club and someone who wasn't afraid to try to sort this out, this would not be an issue for him. After he finished scoring his arrows, he ran behind the tent line to the opposite end of the field, tried to find out as much information as possible, console Scarlett, make a decision about what to do, and then run back to shoot his arrows in the second detail, which was not easy when the detail is only two minutes long. The eventual decision was that Scarlett had

to take losing that arrow, because there weren't really sufficient grounds to shoot under protest. Stephen's end wasn't that bad, having returned to his bow just in time for the start of the detail.

When it came to the results, SUAC achieved some notable glory, as Luis came second in the senior gents recurve, the winner shooting an impressive 352 at 30m to take victory. Andrew won his novice gents recurve by a mile, destroying the previous BUCS record with a score of 1182. James N also went on to win the novice gents barebow with a new BUCS record of 747, while Fiona came third in the novice ladies barebow, comfortably in the end with a score of 661. The senior team of Luis, Simon (agonisingly short of getting the 1000 FITA star badge), Stephen (woop) and Chris came 6th, edging ahead of Cambridge by 9 points, to earn Southampton some more BUCS points. The novice team of Andrew, Matt P and Jamie finished in 5th, though Jamie could probably have achieved a higher score if he had been able to practice more. The novices would have come second if Janna was allowed to be on the team, but unfortunately this is one of those competitions where she has to represent Portsmouth, her one-woman team coming 19th out of 25 novice teams as well as being in the top 10 individually.

With the absence of Perry Fung to take all the photos, the responsibility fell to Ruth, who by this point was conspicuously dressed as a giant owl for some unknown reason. The potential flashpoint in the senior ladies recurve ceremony failed to materialise as everyone shook hands this time; it turns out there was a back story for what had happened at BUCS indoors that wasn't personal between the medallists.

There was time for a team photo too, though we weren't sure if Rachael was taking lots of photos or filming us since it took forever, while Stephen was meant to be at the BUCS meeting. The meeting was actually very productive, and it sounded like he's already being enlisted to help run a future BUCS Outdoors, though as he pointed out, he still has one year left of being in SUAC.

Walking back with the people of Surrey, Stephen received another unusual statement/proposition, this time from their novice longbowyer who chose to point out that she had a double bed in her tent. Of course, this was entirely innocent as the place was taken by her longbow, though a little context could go a long way sometimes.

SUAC managed to miss the Boat Race, despite the pre-BUCS hype of who would be in the squad, as several people made a shopping trip to buy drinks while the Boat Race took place. Stephen's bag had been packed away in the minibus while at the meeting, so he went off with Janna who also needed something from the bus, though they ended up going missing together for an hour. Fortunately, there was plenty of food to go round when they returned. Some chose to try to get an early night, while others (including those shooting the next day) stayed up a bit later, when the tent attracted a few random visitors from some of the Scottish universities.

The main 'lads' tent didn't get to sleep quite so early as it turned out, with several people making shadow puppets instead, before getting tangled up in the rules of rock-paper-scissors-lizard-Spock. In the other 'lads' tent, Matt L had decided to break away and use the other tent pitch that we had paid for by setting his own up, justifying it by the fact that he needed to be up to do the H2H the next day. Rumours of noise pollution from that tent the night before were purely coincidental.

The next morning, most of the non-shooters had decided to lie-in and sleep off what they had drunk the night before, leaving the actual competitors to make their own breakfast, though Ally Miller was up to help make the scrambled eggs (which Boris says were really good). We were a little bit later than planned, partly because Stephen used the wrong size pan to try to fry all the sausages in, but we were still on time with the extended registration period for the Sunday.

Some archers were feeling the effect of the night before, regretting how much they had drunk when it came to shooting properly. Stephen was merely half asleep at the start, managing to kick his own bow over during practice when trying to pick it up, and then in the first end calling out "9,9,8," and then promptly writing '8' in the first box (normally you don't score yourself but we were missing people on the target). It was also nice for the senior gents to shoot with the female archers for once (no innuendo), since the entire non-compound field was mixed together. It also gave Stephen the opportunity to get to meet more archers from different universities as he tends to do, including someone from Birmingham who fondly remembers a previous Matt Potticary equipment failure from BUCS Indoors, having shot with him.

With no threat of rain and the sun beating down, there were some good scores in the H2H seeding round. Luis got the number 1 seed (and BUCS record since it was the first one) with a score of 643 in his 70 m FITA 720, Andrew broke 500 again to seed in 33rd, and Boris scored exactly 600 with his compound at 50 m. Boris had predicted this beforehand, raising eyebrows with his claim that he usually gets 300 for three dozen! There was some confusion at lunchtime, as some people tried to figure out the H2H seeding system and their opponents, while our mascot Parker had gone missing at some point. It did present us with the opportunity to finally present Luis with his dolphin-based leaving present since he wasn't at the end of year meal, wasn't with us on the Friday meal, and had a nap after the Gents FITA the day before. We also unveiled the new club mascot, Luis the Jaguar, to go alongside Parker once he was retrieved.

Eventually, the seedings were announced, and some of us in the gents recurve had to play a preliminary round just to get into the last 64. Declan won his match while James 'Frodo' Strudwick did not. Since we all had number plates indicating our competition and seeding, for instance Men's Recurve abbreviated to 'MR', Frodo's seeding of 70 was one place away from what was everyone (Janna)'s favourite position, MR 69.

Meanwhile, stories of what was happening from the morning with the non-shooters were coming out. Janna said that she 'would kill, no, really kill for a sausage and egg McMuffin'. Unfortunately, this might have frightened the poor person walking in front of her, walking with a McDonald's bag in their hands! It sounded like there was a bit of a mess in trying to work out how to pack everything up – those competing were advised to make sure they had packed their bags before they started shooting, but there was confusion about whether one bus was going to leave early, and which bags should be packed where. As it turned out, this got too confusing, and the non-shooters decided to wait until the end with everyone else, which is just as well seeing as it was a weekend trip and we are ultimately supposed to be a team that supports each other. Also, there was a bizarre mystery as another team had gone on to our camping site in the night and relocated the trailer for Ruth's camping equipment to elsewhere on the field.

Declan's reward for making it to the last 64 was to play the number 5 seed. Surprising everyone including himself, Declan went 4-0 up but couldn't finish it off, losing 6-4. Further to his left, it

became apparent that Luis would possibly have to take out fellow SUACers if he was to progress to the latter stages, as he was due to play Andrew in the 1/32 round and Stephen in the 1/16 round. Unfortunately this never happened as the 33rd seeded Andrew couldn't beat the 32nd seed. Stephen managed to pull off a shock result by beating the 17th seed from Cambridge 6-4 from being 48th (which went down well with Oxford), while his opponent in the next round also pulled off a shock by beating the 16th seed in a shoot-off from 49th. John Bowes also pulled off a shock, beating the 13th seed, also in a shoot-off, from his seed of 52nd. In total there were six upsets from the round. Luis won his first round match easily, at one point even having time to contest with the judges whether he was right to be able to leave his scoreboard by the targets. Luis even won that battle – “they told me I couldn't leave my scoresheet up by the target, but <casually shrugs> I guess I can!”

The next round saw the start of the other bowstyles' main draws, with a mixed longbow/barebow category and a mixed compound category. Those went to according to the seedings for the SUAC archers, with James N losing and Liam winning in the unsighted, and Boris being edged out by three points in the compounds.

John couldn't quite repeat his achievement by losing 6-4 to the 20th seed, while Stephen got beaten as his opponent won another shoot-off. This left Luis to progress without shooting against any of SUAC.

With the numbers starting to be whittled down, Liam went out in the next round to a higher seed, while Luis convincingly beat Stephen's conqueror. The field party started dancing to the Timewarp being played in the background (which looked like a lot of fun), while there was a kerfuffle brewing over packing up, with a request to take down the tent on the line in order to speed things up, even though people were still shooting. Eventually, once the message got through that Luis was still using it between ends to shelter from the wind that had picked up, packing was brought to a halt. Scarlett was getting unnecessarily in a tizzy about not knowing if her chair had been packed in the right bag on the bus, given that we would all be going home together and we could sort it all out later, and Parker was still missing. This meant some tempers were starting to fray a bit.

We went over to question the other SEAL teams whether they had dolphin-napped Parker as they seemed like the most obvious suspects, but nothing was found. There was a brief threat to cover Surrey's minibus in cling film that didn't go ahead, the team opting to cling film Fiona instead. Stephen was persuaded to go to the official PA to ask if Parker could be returned, the joke being that he didn't want to be seen to make a flippant request given that he has some level of responsibility, and he went with Ally, who admitted to not being good at talking when it came to things like this! However, after the announcement Parker was not returned*.

Some of us wanted to stay to the end, while some seemed to want to go home when possible. Luis finally got beaten by the number 9 seed in a shoot-off in the quarter finals, the winner eventually going on to win the whole competition. Since the people trying to pack the minibus were still trying to tie everything down, in the end those that wanted to stay to see who won managed to do in spite of all the fuss.

As we made the trip home, it became apparent that a tyre on one of the minibuses had been running flat, so we would have to stop to fill it with air. However, with the flat bus following the other, the message about directions got confused and the buses took a slightly longer trip towards

finding a station. Once there, the first machine didn't work, so a spare pump had to be used, though the tyre would gradually run down again. In trying to get away, one of the minibuses started juddering in full view of the other bus as well as the people on board, as we discovered that Frodo hadn't managed to release the handbrake properly. There would be drama further along on the motorway as the tarpaulin on one of the minibuses appeared to be flapping in the air. Up to this point, Stephen and Rachael had been texting each other to keep the buses updated on the progress but Stephen's phone promptly ran out of battery just at that moment. This caused a scramble to try to get hold of anyone on our bus, but with Declan's phone stuck in his pocket Andrew was the one to pick up. We reached the nearest service station, and followed the sign for buses and HGV as per usual, except we soon discovered that this merely was taking us back on to the motorway. After some entirely legal and safe manoeuvring back to the entrance, we were able to stop and fix the tarpaulin. At this point, one of John's cans of cider sprung a leak. Luis was curiously on hand to help make sure that it wasn't going to go to waste, though he didn't ask if it contained alcohol until after he had drunk some of it. He did like it though.

We stopped off at the pre-designated service station, the two buses surprisingly not too far apart from each other, for the regular meal and competition ice-cream stop. The final stretch involved a long discussion between buses about the etiquette of putting kisses on the end of messages (via messaging) and the more serious matter of BUTC hosting, while Frodo went to sleep (fortunately Chris was now driving). Trying to focus on all three things happening around at once was not easy! The buses eventually arrived back in Southampton for us to be able to get home at around midnight of Sunday/Monday, bringing to an end this enjoyable season, which has had its ups and downs but ultimately ended with us coming home with some prizes and having fun (in moderation). Of course for those of us still around, it doesn't stop as we'll be still doing some competitions over the summer before the indoor season starts.

*P.S. Parker has since been recovered, the culprit being a former captain who pointed out that the mascot was left unguarded for hours.