

Chris Dunn and Ray Lavin visit to Ireland – August 2011



We were picked up from Belfast International by Andy Kennedy and taken to the Radisson Hotel in Belfast. From there it was over to the old RUC country club for a meal and the chance to meet a few of the local umpires. I must say that the welcome that we received was tremendous and that their hospitality was second to none.

We discussed our different types of cricket and it was interesting to hear the lads tell us about their own 'characters' from a Saturday afternoon.

The plan was for us to be picked up by our respective partners and to reach the grounds by 11am as their

games were starting at noon.

I was chosen to umpire Carrickfergus v Ballymena and Ray did Instonians v CIYMS.

My partner was Noel McCarey and Ray's was Andy (whose surname escapes me).

They play a straight 50 over format, win or lose but use the Duckworth/Lewis method in the event of rain. This caused me a little trepidation at first as I envisaged all sorts of calculations, but Noel assured me that it was a great system. Sure enough we had rain and Noel explained that for every full eight minutes lost in the first innings, we reduce the game by one over per side, and any interruptions in the second innings is reduced by one over for every four minutes lost. As soon as there is a chance of rain, the scorers have to provide the umpires and captains with a breakdown of the full Duckworth/Lewis calculation. Noel explained that we as umpires don't have to do anything with this calculation other than be aware of the par score.

What I was fascinated by was that our Northern Ireland colleagues wear coloured clothing, (blue) in the form of sports shirts (no ties!!) Noel told me that at first a lot of the senior colleagues did not 'buy in' to this idea but slowly they have all come around to the idea, and all colleagues now all wear the coloured clothing.

I took time to explain how our ABB's are used and Noel who is the Chairman of the NIACUS seemed very interested in the transparency of this system as players and clubs would be aware of the standards expected of them.

Like ourselves, they have also had the discussion whether to signal on the fourth or fifth delivery. As a compromise they decided to signal on both fourth and fifth!! I found this a little laborious at first but as the game went on, it became second nature.

The standard of the Premier League is not too far away from our own with many of the Irish internationals playing; Peter Sterling who will be opening the batting against England on Thursday plays for Carrickfergus. Overall, from the small snap-shot that I witnessed, I would say that the batting is better than the bowling in their league.

After the games, it was back to the RUC country club again and another feast!!

On the Sunday prior to us leaving we were given a tour of the 'bright spots' of Belfast and then off for another feast of food and drink to a place called 'The Point' which is part owned by Ian Houston, who is their appointments secretary.

We were then taken back to the airport for our flight home, happier and heavier I must say!!

The whole experience has been fantastic for me and I am sure that Ray agrees with me, that it is a fantastic arrangement that we have with our colleagues in Northern Ireland and one that we should continue to operate.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of me and Ray to thank the committee once again for giving us both this chance