**Match Squad**


Day two of the three match series against Landstede (National Dutch Champions) started with a training session. After reviewing the first match, the team worked hard on their defence positioning and on specific rotations. Landstede increased the size of the squad with two of their starting players returning from injury.

Both teams started confidently and traded point for point until 10-10. Nathan French raised the bar with three aces from five serves which took England to the technical with a 16-11 lead. A double sub (Adam Bradbury for Alex Jenkins and Kieran Sowden for Leon Chambers) kept three attackers on front court. The five point lead was maintained for the rest of the set, Jenkins and Chambers returned to the court with Chambers putting the ball away to seal a first set victory 25-20.

The second set followed a similar pattern to the first set with both teams going point for point. Two blocks followed by two middle attacks by Pete Bakare took England to an 11-5 lead. Cameron Carrington and French continued to pass well which allowed Jenkins to distribute the ball through all positions. With the England middles causing problems for Landstede, French and Carrington were able to attack quick balls from the left side and on the pipe. A Carrington kill took England into the second technical at 16-11, James Baker subbed in for Carrington across the back court to stabilizing the pass. Nathan Fullerton scored four points with two blocks and two kills, and the 25-20 set was closed out with a kill by French to give England a 2-0 lead.

Landstede increased their service pressure and raced to an early 8:4 lead in the third set. With the momentum firmly in the home teams favour, Landstede’s block defence up’d their game winning points from the service line and making life difficult for the England attackers. At 17-9 Bradbury came on for Carrington to help with the pass, at the business end of the set England started to trade again with three points from Bakare but it was too late with Landstede winning the set 25-15.

At 3-3 in the fourth set it looked like both teams would carry on where they left off in the third set. Landstede’s opposite scored three points on the bounce to take them into the technical with an 8-5 lead. Two kills from French pulled the score back to 9-10. Baker came in across the back court for Adam Karakoc but four quick attacks extended Landstede’s lead and took them into the technical at 16-9. Landstede continued to apply the pressure from the service line, forcing England into difficult attacking positions. Sonny Chaney and Bakare killed a ball each but it was too little too late with Landstede winning by the same score line as the previous set.

In the fifth set the England attackers went all out with Bakare, Fullerton and French all making crucial kills to take England to the turnaround at 8-7. Landstede took a three point lead straight after to 11-8 but 17 year old Carrington scored 4 four points through the left side, 2 stunning blocks on the big right side and 2 quick attacks, to return England to lead 13-12. England had two match points at 14-13 and 17-16 but Landstede’s experience showed as they took the set and match at 21-19

The England players and staff believe they improved their performance from the previous match and adapted well to the change in the opposition’s personnel. It was encouraging to note that at numerous points in today’s game the front court’s average age was 18 years old. The way the squad played in the first two sets and then the fifth is a testament to their quality, tenacity and character.