



James van Amstel

Those of you who have attended the Amsterdam Sevens tournament, will probably by now have heard that James van Amstel, one of the great names in Amsterdam rugby circles, has unfortunately passed away. James was heavily involved in Amsterdam rugby, and was a legend in the central area of Amsterdam, where he was behind the bar at the Cafe Corso for over 30 years. In his early years he was in the Marines but an injury led to him leaving and brought him back to Amsterdam where he started to work as barman, ending up managing the Corso, before “retiring” to the customer’s side of the bar a few years ago. The Corso has been the Amsterdam Clubhouse for the White Hart Marauders since the mid 80’s and big James was at the heart of that relationship.

I remember the first time that I met him, towering over me, hands the size of shovels, with a huge Dutch style moustache. I was glad it was in the Corso and not on a rugby pitch! The welcome every year when the Marauders arrived in town was always the same, an immense hug from James and a pint of Heineken on the bar. I will have two everlasting memories of James. The first is as I can see him in my mind right now sitting centre stage with his huge frame taking up most of the window area in the Corso Bar in Amsterdam. Nobody else can fill that space.

The second memory was when the “James’s” Marauders won in Amsterdam, at I think their third time of trying. After competing successfully in Amsterdam, including winning the trophy three times, the Marauders decided to take two sides to the tournament instead of one. We started off by playing our “B” side under the Corso banner but because of the great support that we had had from James and the Corso over the years, Howard Graham and the committee decided it was time to “honour” James by putting the “A” side out in Corso colours. That year was the only time I ever saw James with tears in his eyes. I think there might have been a lot of others around who also had tears in their eyes was when he was holding the winners Silver Pier at the award ceremony, and I had tears in my own eyes at that sight. So, two great memories for me, and I am sure you will each have your own.

Rest in peace James, our thoughts are with you, and you have left a big gap to fill!

Billy White
Chairman, White Hart Marauders