



2010 Homeless World Cup Report



November 2010

www.streetfooty.org

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Introduction

The Homeless World Cup is a life changing international football tournament. From Argentina to Afghanistan, South Africa to Scotland, Cambodia to Canada - homeless people take part in a once in a lifetime opportunity to represent their country and change their lives forever.

There are one billion homeless people in our world today. The Homeless World Cup is both an annual global football tournament and a support structure to develop grassroots football projects for socially excluded people year-round. The Homeless World Cup Foundation uses football to encourage and energise people who are homeless to change their own lives. Currently it works with football programmes in over 70 nations, reaching 40,000 homeless players every year, with the ambition to engage one million players with the benefits of football by 2012.

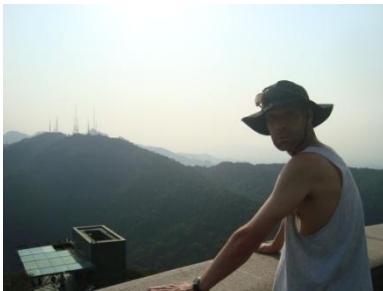
Street Football Aotearoa is the New Zealand partner of the Homeless World Cup and is a Charitable Trust (Charity No CC25637) which aims to support homeless and excluded people to train for and participate in the annual event. We currently support weekly training sessions for homeless and marginalised people in four New Zealand cities, reaching approximately 100 people each week.

In September 2010, thanks to the generous support of a number of organisations and individuals, eight homeless people had the opportunity to represent New Zealand at the 8th Homeless World Cup in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The team manager was Katie Owen and the coach Steve Fletcher, an experienced coach and referee from Auckland. For additional support, social worker Gabor Radak and Street Football trustees Tom Kelly and Kate Amore accompanied the team.

The team who travelled to Rio were:



Tim Aitken (Dunedin)



Fraser Hoffe (Wellington)



Kingi Hotu (Auckland)



Kaha Keepa (Wellington)



Patrick Shannahan (Christchurch)



Terereao Thompson (Christchurch)



Kevin Wagstaff (Wellington)



Fabian Waenga (Wellington)

Pre-tournament preparation

Oceania Football Confederation Training Camp

In preparation for the Homeless World Cup, the squad met together for an intensive 3-day training and team-building camp at the Oceania Football Confederation's Charles J. Dempsey Academy at Mt. Smart Stadium in Auckland. The group was warmly welcomed by Steve McLuckie and John McCarthy from our Auckland partner agency LIFEWISE and by Oceania Football Confederation General Secretary Tai Nicholas.

The excellent academy facilities were generously provided by Oceania Football Confederation - giving us a great base for training games and letting everyone get to know each other and take it easy before the pressures of Rio. Sam Sami of The Salvation Army joined the group in training, as did John Love, a veteran of the 2008 Homeless World Cup team, who passed on his own experiences of the event. There was a trip north of Auckland to the hot springs at Waiwera, and for the players, most of whom are more comfortable with the oval ball rather than a round one, a special tour of Mt. Smart Stadium with Kiwi Rugby League legends Tony Tatupu, Jerry Seuseu, and Dean Bell.



Team NZ with Jerry Seuseu and Dean Bell

The training camp also provided an opportunity to open the doors to the media - with the team appearing on Māori Television (*Te Kāea*), Prime (*The Crowd Goes Wild*), Radio New Zealand (*Morning Report*), and doing interviews for various newspapers. Hayley Holt from *The Crowd Goes Wild* was very popular with players - in fact they were queuing up to speak to her! The training camp was capped off with a friendly match against our Oceania hosts. The multi-lingual team of administrators, football coaches, and former professionals was a tough nut to crack but the game finished a respectable 5-5.



Team NZ with OFC Technical Directors

We wish to extend our gratitude to all who helped make the training camp possible for the players. Paula, Priscilla, and the rest of the Oceania Football Confederation staff were remarkably generous and made us feel so welcome. Oceania Football Confederation also supported the team by sponsoring the playing kit and travel jackets, helping Team New Zealand to look and feel like a national team.

The Homeless World Cup

Arrival

Rio de Janeiro 2010 was 8th Homeless World Cup after the 2009 event in Milan and 2008 in Melbourne (which was the last Cup we attended). 48 nations from across the world participated in the Rio tournament, including the 12-team women's event. The team was able to participate at the tournament thanks to the generous support of Christchurch City Mission, Cuesports Foundation, Downtown Community Ministry, LIFEWISE, the Hon Murray McCully - Minister for Sport and Recreation, NZ Football, Wellington City Council, and Tim and Kaye Whitehead Real Estate.

Team New Zealand departed on the 17th September 2010 for a gruelling 20 hour journey, stopping for 6 hours in Santiago, brief stopping again in Sao Paulo, and finally arriving in Rio de Janeiro at midnight local time.



Departures – leaving New Zealand for the first time!

Unfortunately, as we waited for hours for our Homeless World Cup-provided airport transfer, and listened to our calls to the Homeless World Cup 'emergency line' ring through, it became apparent that the support promised to the teams was not in place as it should be. Breaking the chronology of this report, in the next section we will address all of the major problems we experienced as a result of the inadequate planning and communication of the Homeless World Cup organisers.

Organisational problems and their impact

The Homeless World Cup always relies heavily on the goodwill of volunteers and the support of the host city to run its tournaments. However, the organisation of this years tournament was, it is fair to say – a shambles – due to lack of funding and organisation by the host city, and lack of appropriate oversight by the Homeless World Cup. Poor communication of these realities to the participating teams left us, along with many other teams, feeling disappointed, confused, and isolated in the large and confronting Brazilian city.

Problems included:

- Difficulties with airport transfers;
- A mix up over accommodation which almost left us with nowhere to sleep on the first night (after 24 hours of travelling);
- After being promised youth hostel accommodation, our final accommodation turned out to be large building, hastily being converted to house four teams. Between them, these teams were expected to share small, overcrowded bunk rooms, one shower, one working tap, and none of the usual hostel faculties (guest kitchen, internet, communal space).;
- The promised English/Portuguese speaking guide never eventuated;
- The promised evening entertainment and activities were non-existent.

The difficulties associated with our accommodation had a huge impact on the morale and wellbeing of the team. Not only did players fail to get over the stress of the journey, but poor sleep seriously affected the mental health of two of the players. In addition to the poor accommodation, the lack of promised evening entertainment and activities for players caused serious challenges. The different teams were not able to mix and get to know one another; instead our players became bored and there was some verbal in-fighting between teammates. A number of the players put themselves in risky situations by wandering the streets of Rio at night. As team managers, we did not have the financial capability to provide sufficient activities every night, which we might have been able to plan had we been informed of the situation before we left New Zealand.

The football

Despite a series of organisational challenges marking an extremely stressful first 24 hours in Rio, Team New Zealand joined the other 47 teams in a colorful procession along Copacabana Beach on the Sunday morning for the opening parade of the tournament. The reserved and slightly overwhelmed New Zealand players were surrounded by a sea of screaming Norwegian Vikings, Nacho Libre Mexican wrestlers, Namibian singers, and whirling Croatian clerics.



Team New Zealand, led by flag bearer Paddy Shannahan from Christchurch

Following the subdued opening procession, Team New Zealand sprung to life with a first outing against Germany with a powerful and impressive haka, which was genuinely electrifying. The game that followed, although played largely on the back foot against a typically well-drilled German side, brought the players together with some good team work and gritty determination.



Team NZ open with a haka

The football matches were played daily from morning through to late afternoon on two specially constructed pitches on the famous Copacabana beach. After a grey and drizzly first day, the sun came out and most games were played in heat reaching the high twenties.

The team found themselves in a particularly tough first round group, including the fit and skillful young teams from Kenya and Ghana and the well-organised Germans and Costa Ricans. Team New Zealand, still struggling with jet lag and fatigue, struggled against the fast and relentless pressure on goal from the other teams. However, the players began to enjoy the atmosphere, slowly overcoming their shyness to mix with other nations and make some friends with players from Argentina, Kenya, Ireland, and Norway.



Team NZ congratulate Kenya on their victory

The opening game of stage two was a 7:3 loss to Canada. It was a close game, played yet again in blistering sunshine that favoured neither side and took its toll on tired legs. Kaha, Fabian, and Tim got the goals - for each it was a first goal of the tournament and helped lift some of the tension.



Pre match focus

After the challenges of the first round, Team New Zealand began to find their level, with a close 6:3 defeat to Hungary. Fraser was back on the scoresheet and Kevin put in a good shift in goal to keep the score down. Gabor Radak, our Hungarian-born, New Zealand-resident Assistant Team Manager, had to watch the match from the stands rather than pitch-side so that he could cheer for both teams.



Kevin in goal



Fraser on the ball

Without a win in the heats, New Zealand qualified for their final games in the INSP Networking Trophy. This included a rematch against South Korea. The match against the Koreans had been on the cards for a couple of days and gave the players an opportunity to redress the grievances of their previous game, in which Korea illegally fielded two Brazilian reserves for the whole game. This time, after strong encouragement to play more of their own nationals, they fielded only one Brazilian and were comfortably beaten 7:2.



Team NZ win against South Korea

Over the week, the team played 11 matches and learned a lot about team work, communication, and problem solving. Unfortunately, the problems off the field affected their on-field performance, and as the week went on exhaustion and injuries really began to show. A final defeat to Slovakia saw New Zealand finishing 42nd overall, one position behind our 2008 placing.

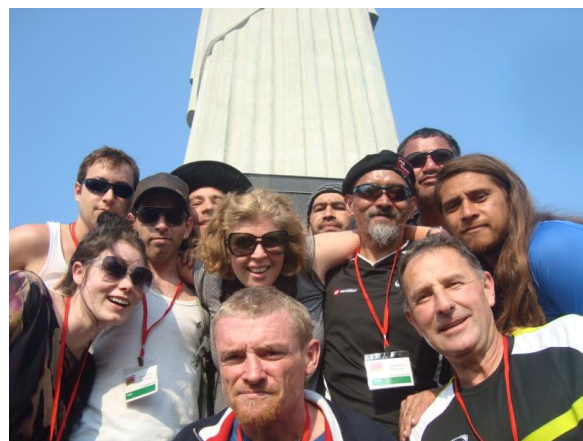


Closing Awards Ceremony

The finals of both the men's and women's Homeless World Cup were won comfortably by the two Brazilian sides against Chile and Mexico respectively. In an emotional closing ceremony, awards were also presented to the Chilean No. 5 as player of the tournament and the Kenya goalkeeper who was honoured best goalkeeper. Each New Zealand player was presented with a medal for their participation in the tournament and the team brought home the plate for 42nd place.

More Fun than Wins

At one point during the week, one of the players coined the phrase “*we are having more fun than wins*” which quickly became a motto of the team as we encouraged the players to have fun and explore some of the sights and sounds of Rio. We were lucky enough to have group activities and sightseeing trips supported by Stillwaters Community in Wellington, the Wellington branch of Te Ao Māramatanga, and several generous individuals. As the week progressed, these became increasingly important to bring the players together and generate a sense of belonging and team work.



The team visits Cristo Redentor, the iconic statue of Christ the Redeemer which overlooks Rio from Corcovado Mountain. Gabor and Fabian point out the Homeless World Cup on the beach far below.



Enjoying a meal together and (pretending to) surf on Copacabana Beach



Exploring the Maracana – Brazil's national football stadium, built for the 1950 World Cup and being refurbished for the 2014 Cup. The team were shown around and told some of the history of this iconic ground. Some of the players, more familiar with Frank Bunce than Franz Beckenbauer, discovered who Pele is.



Taking the old tram to the neighbourhood of Santa Teresa with wonderful views down over the old city and modern cathedral

Making New Friends

One of the aims of the Homeless World cup is allow homeless people from around the world to mix together and explore each other's cultures and experiences. The lack of central venue and organised entertainment meant that this feature of the event was sadly missing this year. Despite the limitations, some of the players made considerable effort to befriend and mix with other nations and teams. Particular friendships were made (and shirts swapped) with the quiet young men from Argentina, the mixed-ability indigenous team from Canada, and the enthusiastic and spirited Kenyans. Kevin in goal became the official supporter of the 'Lady Salamanders' – the all female team from the USA - while Fabian generously gave away his guitar to talented but guitarless young musician from Brazil.



The goalies of New Zealand and USA unite



Christchurch City Mission goes to Kenya and Kenya comes to Christchurch

A highlight of the week was joining a local team of Brazilian students with rugby training. Three of the players, as ambassadors for New Zealand, joined in for some coaching and then an impromptu rugby match, where the skills and precision of the New Zealand tackling drew the praise of the locals.



NZ players coach the Botofogo students at Rugby

Thanks and key lessons

We would like to express our gratitude to the many organisations and individuals who supported Team New Zealand to participate in the Homeless World Cup and have the opportunity travel to Rio. The unique success of the Homeless World Cup is the positive association of health, wellbeing, and developing people's individual strengths and skills while addressing poverty and disadvantage on an international stage. The Homeless World Cup consistently leads to over 70% of players significantly improving their lives through employment, housing, education, and/or drug/alcohol treatment programmes.

Team New Zealand's participation and success in Rio was certainly affected by tiredness, health issues, and difficult behaviour and dynamics within the team. We have learnt important lessons about the challenges of bringing individuals with different attitudes and needs together with only limited pre-tournament preparation. The ability of individuals with significant mental illness and addictions to be able to cope with long distance travel and a challenging living situation in a different culture will need careful consideration in the future. The importance of an adequate support structure from the Homeless World Cup was also a key learning from this experience. Given the relative scarcity of soccer players in New Zealand, our team is likely to continue to struggle to be competitive in the Homeless World Cup tournaments. This makes the non-soccer activities even more important - opportunities to meet and socialise with other players in safe and supported environments; they are vital to give our team, and others like us, purpose and focus for the event.

Only time will tell if the individual players who represented New Zealand this year have benefited from their experiences overseas. However, in the month since we returned, five of the players appear to be making positive changes, including the following:

- Putting together an art exhibition, including works inspired by Rio;
- Found employment in the building trade to help rebuild Christchurch;
- Volunteering at a local school and coaching children in football skills;
- Reconnecting with family and finding work to support plans to have a longer 'OE';
- Settling into a new flat, secured just before leaving for Rio.

Sponsors and Supporters

Cancer Society

Christchurch City Mission

Cuesports Foundation

Downtown Community Ministry

LIFEWISE

Mark Stewart

Hon Murray McCully, Minister for Sport and Recreation

NZ Football

Stillwaters Community, Wellington

Wellington branch of Te Ao Māramatanga (NZ College of Mental Health Nurses)

Tim and Kaye Whitehead Real Estate

Wellington City Council

And many individuals