

SPAIN 2012 - Some Perceptions by PeeBee

Thank You Indubitably each of the 55 tourists will THANK their parents and sponsors for the opportunity to tour Madrid, Valencia and Barcelona.

Each child, each teacher on tour and each parent bows in Thanks to Vanessa who counted no cost in ensuring that each moment was filled with distance run.

Madrid

It may be unfair, but thousands of people who are in Madrid are decidedly not good-looking, and that most of the women are under five foot – very stodgy and looking more like the Galoobs on a TV game. We may have formed that impression because the first place we were taken to was in the old section of Madrid, where an old tobacco factory has been donated to the poor in the city who aspire to art, drama or music, for them to do their thing in the hope of breaking through. Space is not wasted. Spain has a population of 46 million with 56 million tourists per annum. Any rejected piece of land is utilised with crops or with groupies or with graffiti art.

In 1469, Ferdinand of Castile (the province of Madrid) wed Isabella of Aragon (that incorporated Barcelona) uniting all these provinces. It was they who – in 1492 - instructed Christopher Columbus to explore, resulting in the great wealth of Spain. In 1494 the Americas were divided between Spain and Portugal which 2 countries were to unite for 60 years in 1580. History students would love to read how "The Catholic Monarchs" (Isabel and Ferdinand) would marry off their children to ensure their throne, and how the plan misfired where the youngest daughter Juana – supposedly mad – was married off to the Protestant leader of the Netherlands to get her out of the way. Conquering the New World with "Guns, Germs, Gold, Glory and God" in tow, Spain became enormously rich, but entangled in wars. Think of those words one by one. Is it cynical or realistic in interpreting history? The Armada was defeated in 1588. In 1714, Spain was defeated by the Netherlands, and in the same year Felipe V laid siege to Barcelona – a clash that is still going on between Madrid and Barcelona.

Felipe II, in 1561, (he had married Mary of Tudor) chose the little Castilian town (Madrid) in the mountainous inland so that he could hunt boar, get a distance from his enemies and break the power of the church in Toledo. We played our hockey adjacent to the hunting home where the present figurative king Juan Carlos resides. The city population of 3,5 million live in blocks of flats that look like bars of chocolates.

Successive kings established Art and significant buildings and gardens to raise the image of the isolated city. The Oakhill Art kids visited the Prado Museum (Velasquez, Goya, Fra Angelico – set up by the Bourbon Kings after 1700. The Hapsburg Dynasty had ruled from 1512 – the year that Spain united its provinces having been independent kingdoms), the Thyssen - Bornemisza Museum (Titian, Rubens, van Gogh – sold to the state in 1993) and the Reina Sofia (Picasso's Guernica was inspired by the 1937 German bombing on Franco's behalf of the Basque town of Gerniko Lumo.) Beyond the Plaza Major was the Cathedral, and the Palace (The Real Palacio was rebuilt after the fire of 1734 – it nearly matches Versailles in layout and splendour. It was used as a royal residence till 1931 when General Franco forced Alonso XIII to abdicate) and the Gardens. The streets in the old city are narrow, with scarcely a tree to be seen.

An ultimate insult was for Napoleon Bonaparte to put his brother Joseph as King of Spain in 1808 till 1812 following the war of independence. By 1824 the last (Peru) colony was declared independent. (Some others had been Argentina and Cuba). In 1873 the first Republic was declared – but it collapsed after having 3 presidents in the year. In 1909 Barcelona is punished badly for resisting conscription to fight in Morocco. In 1923 Primo de Rivero becomes military dictator, and by 1936, General Franco had put the Second Republic in power. He overcame resistance in Madrid and Valencia but bombed Basque and Barcelona. Franco – a Fascist like Hitler and Mussolini, and Peron in Argentina – died in 1975 having restored the monarchy as a symbol. Spain had it tough until it hosted the Olympic Games in 1992. There is little faith in its government – the weakest economy in Europe other than Greece. It depends on its sporting success in tennis, golf and soccer being current World Cup Winners.

We stayed at Albergue Juvenil Madrid info@ajmadrid.es 21 Mejia Lequerica 28004 Madrid.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HOSTILITY

Barcelona, with Messi beat Real Madrid with Ronaldo by 5-0. It was heaven, even though Real are leading the league contest. But the story goes deeper. Spain had formed as a polyglot of peoples over 15000 years. Carthaginians, Greeks, Visigoths, Romans, Celts, Phoenicians and Moors moved in to Spain successively. Currently poor people move in from all over – including China and Africa. The Moors held power in different provinces for long periods of time. Catalonia (the province of Barcelona) was never popular with the Republicans who laid waste whenever there were clashes. This clash took on religious tones, and made Gaudi into the person he became. His Sagrada Familia was a forthright statement into the face of government.

THE MATCHES

Hockey in Spain is not as it is in Holland. In Holland, the whole family plays as teams in a club run from 6 year olds to 65 year olds, with the 16 to 21 year olds doing a lot of coaching. Touring matches had often to be played late at night after all teams had practised. In addition, after the match, they fed visitors and often had discos with our players going off to sleep at their houses. In Spain, pupils school until 5pm. The players come by car with their parents who assume a quiet background position. Their ball control is excellent and their hockey is simple and unselfish. Only twice did we have teams with Under 18 players and then we were outplayed completely. Our own team was too disparate in ability. Originally we hoped to have 19 to 20 players, thus allowing mostly Under 18 opposition, with three younger opposition games for our peripherals. But the Art students had such a rich tour that they withdrew. Our remaining 16 were decimated by injury to James Segers (falling on Odyssey); Chris Marrow (falling on Odyssey); Josh Pieters (hand injury). The latter two decided to join us. In addition Dru was ill on a number of occasions and Caleb missed two Barcelona games with stomach cramp. Coach Chicco had to play in some games.

Consequently we had about 4 guys who could compete at Under 18 level, and only Chris and Caleb actually Under 16. I don't know how the opposition felt about our discordant sizes. The short corners of Josh Pieters were decisive.

Perhaps the tour should have had 2 more days – in between so that bodies could recover, and that still the same number of games be played. Because the Art people never came to a hockey game and the hockey kids only had 2 events on the house, it was not a clever idea to hold the Art and the Hockey simultaneous. Perhaps a smaller group just with hockey could have been accommodated easier?

Boys Hockey

Result Venue Opposition Scorers Man of Match

Won 5-2 Somontes, Madrid Under 16 Wallington (2); Magadla(2); Kolwapi; Stephen Cameron

A scratch team with no reserves, whom we easily beat. Tom Marrow had a field day on the right. They did not have anyone to carry them. Our peripherals played full matches.

Lost 0-9 Madrid Under 16 - Luke Bell

The opposition were excellent, with 4 being in the Spanish Under 18 team. They knew hockey and had us chasing shadows. Athe's speed worked for us, but his finishing was wild. We were exposed and had no bullets in our gun. This team had lost the National knock-out last year and proved the best opposition.

Lost 3-4 Madrid Under 16 Buchhalter(2). Van der Merwe Adam Oosthuizen

This was a talented but young team – Under 16. Josh Pieters came out of injury. We were leading 3-1 but they took advantage of our inexperienced players in defence. Their hockey was a joy to behold.

Lost 1-2 Valencia Under 16 Pieters Caleb Bell

A young competitive team that played with excellent control and who dominated midfield. This was a good game to watch.

Won 3-0 Valencia Under 16B Pieters. Magadla, Read Chris Marrow

The B team of previous team, who were just small for the bigger bodies in our team. Dru had an asthma attack having played a good game. Chris enjoyed his first match.

Lost 1-7 Valencia Under 18 Athe Magadla

We competed well in the first half but they were very polished, with excellent use of the ball, excellent turn of speed, and with no passengers.

Lost 2-3 Polo Barcelona Under 16 Buchalter (2) Adam Oosthuizen

Some excellent ball control in this young team. They had the better of us though our bodies were bigger than them. This game and the next were played consecutively.

Won 3-2 Polo Barcelona Under 18 Pieters (2); Magadla Chris Marrow

Their elder team were not as talented as their younger side. The short corners of Josh Pieters made the difference. Adam made some tremendous saves to save at least 4 certain goals. This was the most balanced game of the tour.

Coaching - We thought we would be coached by the tour organiser who had played 268 times for Holland and by his team of 3. We had hoped that Sander would spectate and analyse our 2 matches. Two nice young guys who play for Spain put the girls and boys respectively. We thought they would correct individual technical faults. They gave good exercises, but did not correct anyone individually. Book teaching as it were.

Won 7-2 Mataro, Barcelona Club Wallington; Pieters; T.Marrow (3); Magadla (2) Luke Bell

This is an industrial city north of Barcelona. Sander came out with us, but was shocked when the opposition did not arrive. The girls played their Under 14 who had a game with a British team. We played a combo of their women's team, some boys, Chico and Terry. Adam again made some great saves especially when he saved from Terri in a run-off.

In Valencia, Caleb as captain of the Under 16 was interviewed by the local TV

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IN7hgoIaiSU>

Nuria was our sweet guide in Valencia who took us to a great meal.

Josine was our guide in Madrid and did everything for us, including get a dozen tickets for the Real Madrid Game.

Our Guide in Barcelona – Ingrid – was superb. The efforts that she and Barbara made to get us all to the BARCELONA match against Bilbao where we saw Messi, saved the tour for many of us.

I would suppose the skiing in Andorra was the highlight.

METRO

One great thing about this tour was that having guides, we travelled by Metro. The kids benefited from the education, seeing that if you knew the metro and how taxis work, just about anyone can tour Europe before facing the vagaries of life.

RONALDO OR MESSI?

Leo Messi is 24. Already he is the highest scorer ever for Barcelona. This season he has 60 goals and with 11 games to play he might beat Muller's record of 67 as the most goals in a season in Europe by anyone. He earns R1 million a day, without royalties. Our whole group got to see him play Bilbao. Barcelona had played AC Milan two days earlier (1-1) in the European Cup and had to play the second round two days later (won 3-1 with Messi scoring 2 penalties). So he tended to look after his 24 year old ankles. So the game was a bit rusty before 92000 people and the cheapest tickets 90 Euro. A normal coach would be furious, but Messi fills the stadium. He made a great goal by Iniesta – the chap who scored in the World Cup final for Spain in 2010.

In contrast, Real Madrid was more thorough and not resting ankles - Beautiful use of the ball. Ronaldo is great. He knows it. The coach knows it. The crowd knows it. He knows that the crowd knows it. He plays to the gallery more than Messi does, but his turn of speed over 3 metres is brilliant. He just leaves defenders standing. Though I saw him play a poor game in The World Cup in Cape Town, he earns respect.

VALENCIA

"Valencia, in my dreams it always seems – "I hear somebody call to me – I love You"

"In Valencia, long ago I found my paradise of Love "A city of whirlwind romancing

"How charming was her dancing ... " and so the song continues.

These are not the exact words of the song that Mario Lanza sang. You can get it on Google.

Valencia people seem to have a calmer demeanour – something like Port Elizabeth. Unlike the French, they try to help you if you ask for guidance. We stayed in a hotel with a great breakfast, but 3 in a tiny room for the teachers. A walk through the old city is interesting, with the different architectural types adjacent to each other. The river was re-routed, so the old bed is a walk-through for picnics and biking. They have the largest fresh market shop in the world. It is the third biggest city in Spain.

We missed their La Fallas Festival by 2 days, where they hold processions. It was founded by the Romans in 158B, but had long periods under the Moors. In 1258 James I conquered the Moors and incorporated Valencia into Aragon. The Cathedral; was built in 1262, and is in a square that would fascinate any would-be architect, with Romanesque, Baroque and Gothic entrances.

The hemispherical IMAX modern buildings fascinate making a futuristic world with science as the theme. We saw the dolphins and the huge aquarium. It is referred to as Ciutat de les Arts i les Ciències – that translates itself.

BARCELONA

An interesting city. Draw one long line across the map. That is Diagonal Street that takes an hour to cycle. The metros are excellent. We were in a Youth Hostel where nobody could take more than one of any breakfast item, until the guys realised why the tour hoodies had the kangaroo pouches built in.

A Metro away was the old city. Some of the non-Art kids were determined to see Picasso and Lizzy Gardy moved to the front of a two-hour queue for Picasso, did her thing and got 11 of us in at half price. Father Abraham would be proud of her. Picasso shows himself as a perfect artist, very clean, clear, balanced and then he goes wild – not like van Gogh or Dali but under the same influence absinthe.

The kids were excited to see “an Oakhill pupil” Taryn Young handing out pamphlets. There had been a strike on our first day against the Government of course. One thing about Spain is that Art is exposed to everyone. But in Barcelona one can see the cultural differences. There is fashion consciousness and nicer eyes than in Madrid, and leaner slightly taller people. The residents prefer to speak Catalan not the Castilian Spanish of Madrid.

Barcelona is the capital of Catalonia. It seeks independence. In earlier days the kings of Catalonia-Aragon had power in Mediterranean trading. Inland Tarragon was the capital under the Romans, but now Barcelona takes the lead. Nearby Andorra in the Pyrenees is where the kids spent 5 hours skiing in intense sunlight that reddened the skins of the rooineks amongst us. Caleb Bell apparently had a 40 roll tumble. Andorra became independent in 1995, but items were not cheaper.

Las Ramblas is a long walk of shops, shops and shops and some art. There are huge numbers of “Made in China” touristy items everywhere but the non-Chinese items on sale in the old city are excellent.

GAUDI

Antoni Gaudi I Cornet (the latter his mother’s name) died in June 1926 after being run over by a tram, and regarded as a tramp. He had been born in 1852. He was Catalan to the core, but his last few years were dedicated to the Sagrada Familia (The Holy Family Church). It is incomplete, and though some plans survive, some were burnt. It might be completed by 2026. It is truly brilliant. Its shape is parabolic – actually the cypress tree seen as the tree that aspires to eternity – ever upwards.

His father was a coppersmith from Reus and his mom, the daughter of one. Her first 2 children died young. His brother was to qualify as a doctor but died early. A sickly sister lived with him till she died. He spent hours in the fields and was later to see the Golden Ratio in many plants, he saw the ruggedness in plants that endure the wind and was to develop these images in what is now called “Living Architecture” as seen in the Mila House that explains his brilliant thinking. Just that exhibition on the 5th floor is worth a visit to Spain. It shows how he used cut outs of parabolas to get different heights and how he fashioned walls to have the properties of plants. It is great – truly great. “Nature is our great teacher” – and the Golden Ratio!

When in Reus, he was helped by a family friend, Tarrats, to go to Barcelona University to study architecture. At school he got low marks and often failed, and was stubborn and withdrawn. He made two friends Josep Ribera and Eduard Toda. They combined their young efforts to try to restore the mediaeval Cistercian monastery of Poblet near Reus that was damaged after the Government confiscated church property in 1855, just after Gaudi was born. Monks returned in 1940 and these 3 friends played a big part in its restoration.

As a young man, he mixed with Catalan leaders. A beautiful lively woman Josefa Moreau rejected his proposal so he stayed single. There was a move away from Catholicism and the church in some society there were efforts to destroy what could be destroyed. The working classes in Barcelona realised that the strength of their faith, their culture depended on the stability of the family. St Joseph as head of the Holy Family (with Christ and Mary) was taken as the model. The Josephites formed an influential group and were hated by the authorities in Madrid. Father Manyamet proposed the idea of building a Cathedral dedicated to the Holy Family. Gaudi was not chosen originally chosen to do the design, but once he took over he abandoned everything else, collected money, dressed like a tramp and worked till he died.

Before that he had done work for Eusebi Guell for whom he designed the park that we visited showing how rustic stone parabolas could hold up walkways.

Barcelonan industrialist Pere Mila I Camps asked Gaudi – but actually it was his wife Roser - to design the apartment block we visited. It was to be called “La Pedrera” (the quarry) with its non-straight walls looking like wild dessert plants and yet based on the stability of the parabola and the Golden Ratio. Gaudi wanted a huge statue of the Virgin Mary atop the building but the owners refused in case a government would order it to be flattened because of the Catholic connection. In 1909, eight churches were razed to the ground in Barcelona because its residents refused conscription to the army to fight in Morocco. When the owners did not want to

pay him what he charged, he took them to court, won and gave the money to a convent. From then on all his energy went into the Sagrada Familia. He is buried there.

If you look at a desert worn palm with its non-straight lines, that's the impression Gaudi wanted to give. Thus the building lives and endures.

It is amazing how Barcelona is Messi, and Barcelona is Gaudi. Who is Knysna?

The Boy Tourists

Josh Pieters : Josh went on tour with the prospect of not playing but once he saw the 0-9 drubbing from the side-line, he went out, bought a cricket glove, and risked his cricket career. He encouraged the younger ones, threw great overheads to Athe and scored some convincing shorties. A great influence for good and an example to those coming up. At this moment, his leadership is at the level of Robert Muir.

Jake Read : Extremely determined. He more than stood up to the immense pressure of the two genuine Under 18 teams we encountered. He wins those vital balls in midfield and contests. Though not a midfield general, he is a great example to younger kids.

Leo Thesen: Leo had to take the pressure at the back when we played unbalanced defences. His team spirit and his willingness to meet those two imposters of trial and disaster equally gave the next generation further good example.

Athe Magadla: when times were at their worst and the bodies were aching, Athe kept the spirits up. He won recognition as the Player of the Tour (with Chris in tow). His speed was phenomenal even though in most games he was older than the opposition. Total spirit and a great laugh.

Luke Bell: Won recognition as the Best Tourist – co-operative, involved, helpful and absolutely ready to attend any extra activity. Luke became the midfield general that Oakhill has not had for 3 years. He called, he cajoled, and he gave passes of quality. He showed that he can control the centre of the park. Twice Man of the Match.

Stephen Cameron: A truly great first game, but lost confidence with unwise calling from the bench (not of the coach) in the 0-9 defeat. Luckily he was not exposed again. A great tourist, who mixed well, and was the perfect bachelor and gentleman, he has that team spirit that marks Leo Thesen.

Adam Oosthuizen won the Respect from Others recognition. He came on tour as an uncoached keeper, played a few blinders, twice Man of The Match, made gaffes, felt lousy, had his highs and ended on top. He earned the respect of his peers. A tough and resolute lad who should accept the genuine encouragement given to him. Adam had raised all his tour money by selling Breitling watch tickets.

Tom Marrow: Thomas had a few great games, especially the first two, and all the Barcelona games, though in No Man's Land in the big defeats. He was a most cheerful and peace-making tourist, and like Stephen, an honourable bachelor.

James Wallington: James' skills in midfield have improved dramatically and he is a reward for efforts made. He is too erect in either circle. This means that the whistle goes against him bringing moves to an end. Bend the knees.

A happy tourist Luthando Kolwapi: Luthando was far more quiet than amongst the socialising Hollanders, simply because the Spaniards – boys nor girls – did not mix, and that's why he went. Played a great game at left back in the early games, and needs more experience in covering. Often in position to score but swiping across the line. Needs practice to get this right.

James Segers : it was unfortunate that James got injured on Odyssey, as he would have developed and proved his worth. Instead his career is not launched. Was keen to take opportunities to go on extra outings.

Jonathan van der Merwe : Jono's speed and determination worked for us, and it was only in the big defeats that he was badly exposed. A pity that the formal coaching did not address his poor grip. The only boy not allowed too much freedom – though he was not injured.

Joshua Buchalter – The little asides and humour of Bushbaby helped the team progress. His early play was excellent, but fell away when he needed to develop ability to play wherever. If he allowed the process he could still show that he has a clever hockey brain.

Caleb Bell : Had this been a Holland tour, Caleb would have crossed that elusive barrier of mastering astro. Perhaps SWD 2012? Built his defensive unobtrusive game in the first three games to earn Man of Match in Valencia. Just when about to ripen he missed two successive games. Command midfield, as Sander said, as he told you, as he sees your finesse and talent in passing.

Dru Fosbrook : Dru was the victim of injury and sickness, but played great games in Valencia before the attack, and in the vital second last game when he twice saved by great covering. He could make a useful defender if he allowed himself to be recognised.

Chris Marrow: Chris went on tour with bandages from his Odyssey fall. Risked playing in Barcelona where he competed at the n-th level. One assured that his wrist was not broken; he played his heart out as he tackled relentlessly – with blood flowing. Wish that at the coaching session his hips first approach was picked up. I tried to get Sander to observe, but he could not remember. The whistle must not go against you when you tackle. Won Man of Tour on the field, with Athe On & Off. Great show – all heart As long as each kid thinks and benefits from the experience.