

3rd Annual Trans-Tasman Ice hockey Challenge Auckland NZ

Match one

The nerves were like alfoil on your fillings as we walked into the rink.

Wet corrugated ice and the incredibly dank changing rooms of Paradise ice rink, Botany Downs, Auckland. Some great moments, but not many flash memories for the stiffies

Wee bit of a fright here when we observed a very large number of very, very fast hockey players going through their paces. And they were *paces*. We thought it was our opposition warmin up

Luckly for them, it was only the National team who, I guess who had come to see if they could pick up a few pointers from the old farts.

Once we had finished signing autographs for them and the 12 year old rink manager had made the tough decision of which of the two change room doors to send us through, we began our journey in earnest.

By the way he picked the wrong door. 2 days running.

- 5 Games in 5 days.
- 15 warriors of a sought.
- 22,358 Red lions (A soapy, syrupy slop proudly sporting the very relevant icon of a lion urinating and a warning on the back of the tin that claims the substance may contain traces of beer. To date we have found no evidence of anything remotley resembling either the colour, smell or taste of beer...)
- 14 tins of berocca's just in case we do stumble across some of the precious liquid
- 2 emotionally challenged sheep and their friend the Billy the goat. (No idea why the doc had brought them. Maybe it's just a Russian thing. However, not good form when you are in a very small room with 2 other blokes. Must have a word with him later)
- \$552.11c in bail money (all we have in the kitty)
- A proper goalie with a passport and his own teeth.
- A true never give up attitude. It's all about “how can”, not “why can't”.

There is the beginning of a comoraderie between the Kiwis and us. At this point we had met 10 times and whilst some of the names may have changed, many of us have begun to really bond.

Anthems, gift exchange and the traditional Haka. And a very good one at that.

Tradition is very important in organisations. It defines something more than just a name or event.

If crafted well, it outlives people, politics and products.

We are well known for our tradition of never giving up and our egalitarian attitude towards the great polarisation of skills.

This is probably because we have never won a game.

We just love to play.

The unfortunate flip side of this has been the the Kiwis tradition of never loosing a game...to us.

But that very nearly changed in match one.

In the true spirit of the stiffy's we began to organise our lines after the puck had dropped and we were in mid flight. It just came together.

We had now had 1/3 of the team that could skate with these guy's, but it was the other 2/3 of the team that haragned, harrassed, irritated the Kiwis very organised plays by simply stealing all their oxygen, time and space.

This gave our stronger skaters oportunity's as well as shots on goal. An almost foreign experience for the stiffy's in the past.

Whilst the 1st period may have looked a little scrappy, we spent a lot of time in the Kiwi slot and this absolutley messed with their heads. For the first time in 10 games their goalie had to go to work....and hard.

Chalker, Alchin, Elward, Doc, Ryzard Jaskolski all paid visits to the goalie's house and made sure he was awake.

We finally had a proper hockey game.

At the end of period one the score was still nada and zip.

Still a chance.

2nd Period.

Stumbledown got a breakaway but blew a tyrejust as he went to shoot.....right in front of the Kiwi bench.....which was right in front of the entire spectator stand of Kiwi supporters.

No one heard the whistle because they were laughing so hard. The Kiwi bench, the Kiwi supporters, the Australian team, the Australian supporters.

Even ref was beside himself, both the linesmen had lost it as well as the pesky 12 year old rink manager who had wet his dacks.

Oddly enough, stumbledown struggled to see the funny side.

The game pushed on with the same grindy attitude that we saw in the first period until the Kiwis luck changed.

And it was their persistence that brought them luck.

Nothing flash and no good management, just that when you get 22 shots on goal, sooner or later it's the numbers game and ones going to find the back of the net.

At this stage we realised that James Easson, our gaolie would not be able to by a drink that night.

He had achieved legend status within the first 2 periods and stands with the likes of Dave Wong.

3rd Period.

Grind them down to a fine white powder is the attitude of the green and gold.

Push, shove, fall down on purpose, fall down by accident, get in their face, get in the refs face, set up breakaways for the guys'ngal with wheels and go the spoiler.

Just pressure. Not pretty hockey but effective "Friday night" pressure.

Whistle blows.

Done and dusted - 1st game 1- 0 NZ favour

(A small improvement from the 1st tour of a 12- Zip to NZ.)

4th Period

No report.....no one can remember.

Game 2 report due tomorrow, with game 3 now looming in 4 hours.

Stumbledowns blown a head gasket and lost his right front wheel and is on the gate tonight.

Maxi baby has either got dysentery or a really bad back.

Can't tell, he is just walking with his knees together so it could be either.

Have enclosed photo's as evidence that we are not in Thailand playing something else.