

## **An Old Camdenian in Africa march 2010**

A warm welcome to World Cup soccer year 2010.

I must say that as we draw closer to this football spectacular I feel more and more uneasy.

I look around me in South Africa-a prosperous African country-and yet see the millions out of work and living in informal squalor. I note the child mortality rates (going higher) and life expectancy (going lower). I see the terrible matric results that do not bode well for the intellectual future of the country and its` developmental opportunities.

At the same time I see a morally corrupt Government happily spending billions of our tax money to finance a soccer tournament instead of ploughing much needed money into health care, housing, security, education etc etc.

As we sit in the VIP seats and hear the vuvuzelas blasting us from all sides we should pause and appreciate the cost of this to the infant that did not make it for lack of resources, drugs or quality care. To those who will contract cholera as raw sewerage runs through their settlements and pollutes water supplies.

We should ask ourselves if Africa is ready to disproportionately spend so much on an event that seems more designed to try and prove that Africa is fit and able to organise world class events.

For me to uplift the lot of the poor by providing a dignified way of life would be better.

To provide a regular job and offer a safe environment now from which to view a future SA that offers hope for all.

After this, then think perhaps of a Football World Cup.

May be FIFA should have been our conscience and delayed Africa's place until the larger job had been done.

Ah, but money seems to trump all else these days.

But we have it and we all hope it will go well. So get over here and make this a great World Cup and let us use it as best we can to stimulate the SA economy. Perhaps we can turn this into something for SA to be proud of and from which we can create jobs and investments for the betterment of the majority.

As expected the building of stadia went ok and apart from the odd pitch problem, all is in place.

In fact during a visit by Richard Brown and Jo the other week I was able to get us into our local Nelson Mandela Stadium for a quick look before its` official opening.



Having been over The Emirates in 2008 I did find ours a little short on finer details but as Richard pointed out, the stadium had been built with economy in mind. The seating and general atmosphere did seem really good and one could imagine a super pitch side noise from the closely packed 48000 fans.



Here we are at the gates to the stadium (no not heaven) trying to give the impression that we once played the game. However, you will note that both seem to have a need to hold on to the gates as perhaps instant collapse might follow. Ah memories.

If you come over you will find England based near Rustenburg at the Royal Bofokeng facilities (access road still to be completed). Near by is the super Sun City resort with golf courses and inland beach and wave machines to name two aspects of this man made paradise. We have our old Timeshare in this area being Magalies Park that boasts its` own golf course, squash courts, tennis and pools, plus a river.

But be wary of get rich quick prices both from accommodation and air transport.

Remember that this is one of the few FIFA World Cups that have been held in the winter. This is perhaps good news for the European teams but bad news for would be sun bathing fans. If you want sun and sea then head for sub tropical Durban.

Most of the teams are based at the high altitude conditions of the Johannesburg area but we have one or two in George/Knysna and a couple in the eastern area of Mpumalanga and KwazuluNatal. Our area has nobody and nor does Cape Town. The latter is understandable because the weather is likely to be really poor but our city of PE was not even proposed as a base.

Now onto other things.

We have watched, with some amusement, the state visit of our leader, Jacob Zuma, to the palace. All those who meet him do say that he is charming but to this is added the fact that he seems to be devoid of any decision making capabilities and seems to have no view about anything other than to say the nice words that the group in front of him want to hear. It is becoming alarmingly clear that others are pulling his strings, being those groups who promoted him to the leadership position. He is now having to pay the piper.

Cracks appear within the tripartite alliance and it is difficult to see a united front in the future and also to believe that Zuma will not be dropped and replaced by someone more fitting to the role.

His many wives and children (the press here have him at 20 children from 10 mothers) go hand in hand with extra marital affairs. We do not buy the line that this is the African culture. Too many intellectual black people rubbish this claim to give it serious credence.

Our drought in the Eastern Cape continues, with showers replacing baths and the odd bath water being used on the garden. Washing machines have outlets linked to the brown and dusty garden and pipes from 3 roofs are geared to take any rain that might fall into a fast receding pool. We are restricted to a quota of 30kl per month per household or 500litres per day and cut back our usage in all sorts of ways.

Today is another lovely day with a blue sky and mid late 20s. The Coega harbour, which we can just see with some binos, has received more ships but remains devoid of an industrial core tenant. The alu smelter died as Eskom raised prices by 30 odd % then another 25 odd% and still at least 50% more over the next 2 years. An oil refinery is being considered. Will Coega be the same white elephants as the World Cup stadiums?

On the transport front the Gautrain should be in position to link fly in visitors from Jhb airport to Sandton but other sections will follow. The so called Rapid Bus

Transport is not yet completely ready in most cities with some routes being contested by the volatile taxi industry (rabble) who want to run it and have co-ownership. They would say that their informal service over the last few years has opened up the routes and thus they have ownership of them.

Down here in PE the Traffic Police blockaded the motorway for hours illustrating their unhappiness with their conditions of employment. They were rounded up and then let out to go their normal way. The next day they had a sit in at the traffic department and would not budge to take up traffic police duties. They threaten to continue this over the next few days. And so where is this “zero tolerance” on law breakers?!

The ex head of Interpol, our own Jackie Selebi tries his best to get off from his corruption charges and we all expect this to be another case of justice not done as we have seen with so many other high powered ANC people or supporters.

How about some words on tourism and places to see in SA?

If you come over in June/July then there is so much to do and see other than some great soccer.

Jhb will be sunny and clear but very cold at night. Frost potential in the morning.

Winter is good game viewing conditions and so The Pilansberg Game Park and lots of other private parks could be a good place to be. I have already suggested Sun City but golf will a big draw card with some super courses and great dry sunny weather. Most of these places will generally have spa treatments to pamper all those who so wish.

Go shopping at the many malls and buy some local art and crafts from the informal traders. Eat out at the many restaurants that will cater for all tastes and pockets.

In our little Port Elizabeth, get to The Addo Elephant Park and walk the many beaches and wilderness areas. Take a horse ride along the glorious Sardinia Bay and enjoy the many golf courses. Learn to Scuba dive or take to the waves at Jeffreys Bay. PE is a value for money destination with lots of restaurants and hotels.

Go inland to the 1820s Settlers Monument in Grahamstown and a must do for those interested in live theatre is to visit the Grahamstown Festival that takes place over 2 weeks. It is a mini Edinburgh Festival but is vibrant and stacked with great theatre, music and dance.

In Durban it will be warm and the sea beckons. Resorts are scattered both north and south of Durban. It is a big noisy City with beach side restaurants, bars and nightlife.

Cape Town will be wet and cold but on a clear day get to the top of Table Mountain and perhaps take the trip over to Robben island. The harbour area offers great entertainment and also stroll around the historical parts of the city. Get to the Winelands and taste the great wines and eat at the many restaurants with log fires and mountains.

Knysna and George are lovely towns with mountains, lagoons and beaches. Renowned for art and wood furniture and also its many world class golf courses.

In all places eat and drink cheaply (beer say £1 and an average main course say £4/5/6) but remember we have a .05 limit on alcohol in the blood if you drink and drive. Mind you we don't really have a police force of any note but you might be unlucky, as road blocks are soft ways to raise fines and also keep the police away from the dangerous crime ridden spots.

As ever this is enough stuff for you to digest in one go and so I will end now yet keep you informed of more World Cup news as we count down the last 100 days.

All the best from sunny Port Elizabeth.

Alan Shearn