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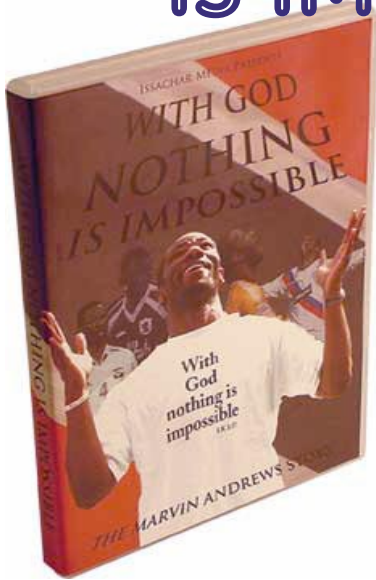
WARRIOR NATION

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WITH GOD NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE!



Includes Interviews with:

- Barry Ferguson
- Alex McLeish
- Jim Leishman
- Leo Beenhakker
- Dwight Yorke
- Davie Hay
- Russell Latapy
- Pastor Joe Nwokoye and more.

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Shaun Fuentes: My Journey



With the greats!

This undoubtedly was an experience that I can describe as one which allows me to die and go to heaven with the feeling of having fulfilled an experience that will be incomparable to none other.

I began my post in October 2000 and for some reason I remained with the TTFF and Team to serve as press officer. I was at the time a football correspondent with the Trinidad Guardian when the TTFF approached me to take the job during the semi-final round of the 2002 qualifying campaign – a time when the team appeared as though a spot in Japan/Korea was there for the taking.

Unfortunately that didn't occur, but soon after that dream ended, it was time for us to host the FIFA World Under 17 Championship, and of course the experience gained there as a young media officer with the host nation, was second to none.

It is no secret that the period following that was a trying one- the departure of Rene Simoes as technical director and the incoming and outgoing of other national coaches as the country struggled to get a grip on the world stage. A trip to the United Kingdom in 2002 preceded two job offers to work in the Leagues over there but again, after consulting with the TTFF bosses, I decided to put country first because there was this feeling inside that something big would be on the horizon and I wanted to be part of it. I put country first!

The struggles were endless. Long days and nights, disappointing results, trials and tribulations, and yes even for me as media officer, the times were testing ones. I guess that's what you get when your heart is with something, when you possess that passion inside of you.

Apart from having a role of keeping the news of the National team in the air, the Federation on



Latas is back!



to training



With the press before Sweden!

a whole needed a PR boost and being the lone media officer didn't make it any easier. Of course, the main aim was to ensure that there would be news of our national team and players ever so often in the local media, particularly the newspapers and that was achieved as the various sports editors recognized the fact that they were being fed with more news on the team than previous and we were also ahead of the other sporting bodies. That to an extent was pleasing. The vision of Jack Warner needs to be commended for that.

Of course, the big test would be competition time both in the CONCACAF and on the world stage. This was going to be our maiden appearance on the global front. Again, I think my advantage of being able to promote this team via the media was based on the fact that I developed a close knit relationship with the majority of the players and the TTF hierarchy hardly ever saw that as a problem. But what it also meant is that there would be times when I had to give consideration to the person or persons involved when it came to making something public knowledge. At least there was mutual understanding at those times. It is interesting to note how sometimes an interview and the subsequent publication could have such a massive effect on someone's general demeanor and personal feelings.

Leo Beenhakker insisted, especially around the World Cup, that my job was to serve as media officer of our national team and nothing else. He stressed that now I had more than ever to protect his team, particularly from the barrage of international media that would be around us. Fortunately, I was able to have an understanding with my "colleagues" both in the local and international media so that at the end of the day the job was being done.

Suddenly too I had to take note of how I was being looked at as the press officer for the smallest nation at the World Cup. I was informed by FIFA media representatives that I probably was the youngest team media officer at the event.

The interest in us was tremendous and we quickly had to adjust and ready ourselves for all that was coming our way. Again the good company of Beenhakker, Yorke and the troops only made this easier. And most people seemed to love us so there was hardly any animosity around. But the demand for access to the team and information was huge from the moment we qualified for Germany. The request to do work for worldwide television and radio productions as well as print publications was increasing by the day. The following are excerpts of the Germany experience.

"Beenhakker, with the experience of being with Holland at the 1990 Finals, felt it was not necessary for the team to jump at every opportunity to bolster its image through the media – commercials and video documentaries. It would all come once the football did the talking and he was right in the long run. The main focus would be to get the team as best ready for the actual game and that game was total football.

Of course, when it came to dealing with the public through the media, the charisma and experience of Beenhakker and Yorke meant there was never a dull moment and then there were other seasoned professionals like Shaka Hislop, Stern John, Russell Latapy, Carlos Edwards and others who ensured that there was always interesting material for the large contingent of international media that was following the outfit.

The majority of the training sessions were closed with only 15-minute windows at the start for video and photos



“I Am a Soca Warrior” cont’d from p. 9)

Bunji Garlin, without paying the agreed fees, and in essence breaching the contract. In spite of this, “Fighter” went on to gain the approval of the Soca Warriors supporters internationally, and is the most successful song of any previous T&T World Cup campaign.

Apart from his musical contribution, Maximus is also involved in a number of T&T Pro League projects, including the recently concluded Toyota Classic. He attends as many of the local league games and international matches that his hectic schedule will allow. When questioned about his views on the present state of T&T football, Maximus replied, “I am optimistic of the future, but I feel that greater investment and contributions can be made by the government, private sector and the general public to further spur on this country’s development in world football, as well as sports on the whole”. He went on to say that, “Sports is a vital part of our society and the government should view sports as a way of propelling our youths to excellence in all areas of professional interest.” He used Olympic medallist Ato Boldon and his current Senatorial role as a prime example of the impact sports can have on career development.

Another major concern of Maximus regarding T&T football is the “unsatisfactory” support the national teams receive from the general public. He attributes this to a portion of the general population being socialized to the point of brainwashing to only support winners—a demoralization

stemming from the country’s defeat by the United States on November 19th 1989. Maximus added that “Trinibagonians boast that we are the best partiers and the best supporters yet most times they will not stand up, make noise and rally behind the team during international matches.”

A second disturbing area of support Maximus high-

lighted was that of the “bandwaggonist” category. He drew reference to the number of new-found supporters who were standing in line for tickets at the Hasley Crawford stadium prior to the T&T vs. Bahrain match claiming on national television to be at their first T&T game; Maximus further stated “After the devil,

I hate bandwaggonists...you can quote me on that!”

In spite of all that needs to be done to ensure a brighter future for T&T football, Maximus remains optimistic and has faith that his people will overcome these obstacles by developing an unconditional supportive spirit and finally the game which he professes to love more than music will continue to give international visibility to our nation and the talents of our athletes.👊

Anthony Valley lives in Brooklyn, NY and is the Member-at-large on the Executive Board of the Soca Warriors Supporters Club.



In Memoriam

We take this time to remember those persons connected to T&T football who passed away during the last two years:

Sean Vincent, 38

Sean Vincent died on Wednesday October 25, 2006 from a heart attack. Sean worked as a cameraman first for TTT and then NCC Channel 4 covering all manner of local sports especially football. He was an avid football player and fan.

Myron La Forest, 18

Myron La Forest, the son of ex-national footballer and youth coach Ron La Forest passed away on October 19, 2006 after being electrocuted while doing maintenance work on the "Johnny Lambrose" ship.

Sean Jackman, 25

Sean Jackman was a software guru at Microsoft when he left this earth at the age of 25. Growing up in Marabella, Sean loved living and sharing experiences with others, gaining friends all over the world through his exploits while at Naps, Howard University and Microsoft. A natural winner who made any task seem effortless, he represented Trinidad & Tobago at Math Olympiads in Romania and South Korea. In his own words on attending T&T's first World Cup, "Then they [the Soca Warriors] came on and I stood there, looking at my team, jogging and warming up on that field. It was a moment that cannot be put into words... Time moved slower, colors were brighter, boobies were bigger, the kind of moment where everything is just enhanced and better. Like watching HD life (if you've seen HDTV you'll know what I'm talking about). We all rise for the anthems. My eyes well with pride... What a moment. The anticipation swells to the point where I can't take it anymore." He was a proud member of the Warrior Nation representing our country on many fronts as a fan, citizen and model human being. He will be lovingly remembered by his family and all his friends.

Winston Sinclair, 57

Winston was a former national team manager and co-founder of the La Brea Football Academy.

Peter Stone

A former Neal and Massy director, Peter was an avid Trinidad & Tobago and St. Anthony's College supporter. After his passing, a pavilion at the St. Anthony's College ground was named in his honour.

Henry Dennie

Ex-national and Paragon defender. Henry was part of the infamous T&T squad that missed out on qualification for the 1974 World Cup in Germany.

continued on page 36


United in N ...Warrior Nation and englandfans

by Martin O'Hara, englandfans

It was a hot day and to accompany the heat and sun the anticipation level had begun to rise too! What had we done! The park was relatively deserted at that time of day and apart from the waiting Embassy officials and a few members of the press we were very much on our own. A quick introduction and a handover of a few boxes and off they went, leaving us with a responsibility that had grown heavily as the tournament proceeded. We had no choice; a decision had been made, invites had gone out and now was the time to see this thing through. A quick inspection soon added to the weight of responsibility, what had they done to the wicket? It was wet through!! Oh no! I didn't think that International Cricket would be this complicated!

It had all started about nine months previous of course, trust me to open my big mouth and suggest that this could be done. We'd checked out the opposition, Paraguay, Trinidad & Tobago and Sweden again! It was during that phone call that the Eureka moment happened, Adrian & myself were chatting away and showing our ignorance of all things foreign by trying to work out what we knew about our opponents. Sweden was easy, blonde hair and Abba,

Paraguay was a problem as we failed to find anything of significance there, but Trinidad & Tobago was a simple one for two cricket fans. It would



be easy wouldn't it? If only we had known the hard work that was in front of us, we would have had that conversation, discussed it, laughed about it and then put the phone down and promptly forgotten about it. But the die was cast and it had to happen.

England had a terrible reputation for its football hooligans, well deserved too. However great steps had been taken in recent years to rid ourselves of this and to be seen as the real football supporters we all knew that we were. Our support is second to none at club level and the dedication of its travelling support at International level has no peers. No matter where England plays, the support level is terrific and we always manage to outnumber the opposition. What we needed to do was

Nuremberg

get together for cricket match.

harness this enthusiasm for English football and channel this into other areas. We had begun to do it effectively in Japan and even more so

related. Berlin was special, a visit to the British Embassy, followed by a trip to the Olympic Stadium where the final would be held. I sat in the seats along with several other England supporters excited by the prospect of returning here to see England win the World Cup for only the second time. Later that night I met a German guy called Heino Hassler who, I didn't know it at the time, was to become a great friend of mine and would prove invaluable to us in helping organise things in his home town of Nuremberg.

during Euro 2004 in Portugal where we added to the whole carnival atmosphere, the result was that we had finally been acknowledged as fun loving supporters. Germany was to be an extension of this, our fan-friendly activities would gain support from the FA, the Home Office and crucially the German fan groups too!

And so began nine months of hard work. The letters, the e-mails, the phone calls, the meetings and everything else thrown in. I lost count of the amount of meetings I attended. I visited Germany on 5 separate occasions, not all cricket related but certainly fan

In April 2006 I visited Nuremberg accompanied by two colleagues of mine, David Barlow and Alan Bloore. We started our trip at the Nuremberg stadium where a press conference took place in front of the whole German media group. It was daunting to suddenly realise that you were live on German television, in a football stadium but with a cricket bat in your hand and attempting to explain how important cricket was to our nations!! This to a nation who had no understanding of the game at all!! The trip was a terrific success! We had found the ideal spot to play this game, not too far to walk, plenty of food and refreshments available and enough green grass to be able to do all the other things we had in our heads. Interestingly the Germans struggled to understand some of the things we wanted to do but went along with it all the same. Did you know that they don't play 5 a-side football in Germany? They were supportive



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