

Week ending 19.6.10

Sunday was lazy until beach touch rugby; for once in a while we had a wonderfully wide strip of wet sand (instead of the hilly, sapping dry stuff) but it was the wrong texture for my feet. Within half an hour I had to retire with burst blisters on my feet; after the walking, and previous barefoot play, I had thought they were tough and impervious – not so for the sand that evening. My feet have been a source of concern for the remainder of the week; struggling to keep the dry dusty dirt out of the wounds without letting them swelter too much in the heat of a sealed European shoe. We had a smattering of rain on Monday morning so I haven't had to worry about trench foot setting in, at least.

College has been quiet; it was the last week of formal lectures before the revision week and exams. Many other lecturers have given up on their teaching and the lethargy has rubbed off onto the students. So two classes failed to appear; they also coincided with some football matches. I did go to the common room to watch one or two games (more atmosphere than the street screen) including the great West African hope of Ivory Coast; you wouldn't believe the amount of excitement the warming up of a substitute could make – when Drogba started to stretch. Professionally, I did also get to solve the software issue for the kid's school so that they can complete their version of year 6 SATs. But, otherwise, I've probably had one of my quietest 'work' week's here.

The rugby has maybe stepped forward. Whilst the Serrekunda gang, the Rhinos, are still 'waiting in the wings' for something competitive to arise I did get a session to introduce contact to the 'Martin Johnsons'. They were only an hour and a half late arriving on Friday afternoon but seemed to enjoy the idea of developing the game in such a fashion.

The only other point of note to the week is another situation of government money raining on my parade. The college sports field is still awaiting redirection after the Vice-Chancellor developed it as a new wonderful convocation hall (that the President's men decided was inappropriate for His Excellency so postponed the graduation ceremony with 16 hours notice!). When I had visited region 6 in March I had come across a school where the 4 teachers were living in the store rooms of their classrooms but the Head was trying to resolve the situation for his staff by saving a little of his income to build new living quarters for the staff. His plight touched my heart, he was not pushy expecting white man support, and as he had shown he was prepared to do something for himself I had offered to see what I could do to help him further with UK support; the cost of building a house amounted to just over £50. I have supplied some cash since, from a charitable donation entrusted to me before departure last summer, but have now learnt that the Government has announced it is planning to build staff accommodation at the site I have been supporting – I just can't win!

On the other hand I have been promised some rowing machines for the college from home; the opportunity for simple sport development will be great and if performances can be logged on line it will be a chance for young Gambians to compete 'internationally' with *concept 2* rowers worldwide. It also got me thinking of the potential opportunity for rowing in the Gambia; I'm sure Oxbridge, and Olympic, boat crews would welcome a huge warm tidal river through the winter training period – I just wish I had the time and contacts to develop the sport/ facilities.

The feet did dry up with a mix of antibiotics and iodine.