



KIRIBATI

2009 FIBA OCEANIA ZDO VISIT

November 2 – November 11, 2009

By Ryan Burns (FIBA Oceania ZDO)

INTRODUCTION

I departed Melbourne at 1.45am on Monday 2nd November after the flight was delayed by 1.5 hours. I arrived in Nadi, Fiji and was transported to my booked accommodation at the Nadi Bay Hotel/Resort. The flight from Nadi to Tarawa, Kiribati departed at 12.10pm on Tuesday 3rd November and arrived in Tarawa at 3.10pm. This was all a smooth process.

I was met at the airport on Tuesday 3rd November by NBDO Mr. Iotia Paul, KBF President Mr. Tenoa Betene and KBF Director (and past President) Mr. Naunta Taatu. I was driven to the Otin Taai Hotel where I checked in. KBF President Mr. Tenoa Betene then provided me with a tour of Tarawa. This was my first visit to Kiribati and I was looking forward to meeting the people and enhancing the basketball that is played there.

VISIT ACTIVITIES

Activities throughout the visit included:

- Level 1 Coaches Course
- Training of NBDO Mr. Iotia Paul
- Meeting with Ministry of Sports
- Meeting with Australian High Commission
- ASOP Basketball Clinic
- Meeting with Kiribati Basketball Federation
- Radio Interview

LEVEL 1 COACHING COURSE

A request was made by the KBF for a Level 1 Coaching Course. This was planned to be held across 4 days from Wednesday 4th November to Saturday 7th November from 5-8pm and from 4-8pm on Saturday. This course was well attended with a total of 21 participants 6 of whom were female and 15 male. It was pleasing to have a strong involvement of younger females interested in coaching basketball and being leaders in their sport community.

A disappointing aspect of the course was that every day saw the sessions begin at least an hour late with no real concern to improve this throughout the course. Even attempts to encourage on time participation and verbal commitments from participants to attend the following session at the correct time proved to make no difference and this seemed to be accepted as the norm in Kiribati. This attitude extended to some participants at times arriving up to 2 hours late. Due to this it was my view that many participants were not at this stage worthy of a Level 1 certification, combined with some participants demonstrating extremely limited basketball background and a

lack of contribution through group discussion and contributions on court. From the 21 participants 6 were awarded with a Level 1 certification, 10 with a Level 0 certification and 5 failed to complete the course to the required standard.

There was some concern in regards to a previous Level 1 Coaching Course that certificates had never been received. To address this I created the relevant certificates in a PDF file and left them with both the NBDO Mr. Lotia Paul and KBF President Mr. Tenoa Betene so that they may print and produce them themselves as the Olympic Solidarity Grant Budget allows for such activities.

AUSTRALIAN SPORTS OUTREACH PROGRAM (ASOP)

Similar to Nauru, Kiribati is also working with the Australian High Commission in their Australian Sports Outreach Program (ASOP). The two sports identified for this program are Basketball and Volleyball. Mr. Kautu Temakei (KBF Secretary and former NBDO) is the program coordinator and conducts regular Basketball Training/Clinics at the Sports Complex with Primary School aged children. I attended this session on Friday 6th November with Lotia (NBDO) and was amazed to see Kautu conducting a training session with 60+ children with equal participation from males and females. Lotia assisted Kautu during the session as I observed their coaching and training skills and I was impressed in their ability to teach, direct and manage the large group. This session was held on a single court, and really the number of children is too high for one or 2 coaches to manage. It would be better to divide the session into 2 shorter sessions with females attending one and males attending the other. The session lasted for 2 hours from 2.30-4.30pm, so sessions of one hour would be more appropriate and also maximize the concentration abilities of the children.

MEETINGS

Australian High Commission

Given that the day of my arrival was Melbourne Cup Day in Australia, the Australian High Commission had a function to celebrate the event. After my initial tour of Tarawa I attended the function with NBDO Lotia Paul to meet some of the Australian officials in the country.

An official meeting with the Australian High Commissioner was arranged for Thursday 5th November, however it was postponed to Tuesday 10th November at the request of the AHC due to official business with the Kiribati Government. Lotia and I met with Australian High Commissioner to Kiribati, Mr. Brett Aldam at 10.30am before my departure from Kiribati. He is a big fan of sports having played AFL, Cricket and Hockey in his home of Adelaide. He is also pleased with the work that KBF Secretary Mr. Kautu Temakei is doing with the Australian Sports Commission backed ASOP. He was very interested to learn of the large numbers of participants that were involved in the current basketball programs. I enquired into available Sports Grants and he confirmed that the Grants for this financial year have already been allocated and that Kiribati Basketball must wait until mid next year to submit an application. He states that only one application was made last year and that one was not granted. Kiribati has only a handful of AYAD's and they are mainly focused on development of government ministry's and important economic development areas. It is however possible for an application to be made if the KBF are interested in the program.

Deputy Secretary to Minister for Sport

I met with the Mr. Kapiniera, the Deputy Secretary to the Minister for Sport on Friday 6th November at 11am. This meeting was also attended by Mr. Korabi Newem a Senior Sport Officer and NBDO Lotia Paul. I informed the meeting that FIBA Oceania plays a development role with Basketball in the Pacific and is supporting the recently appointed NBDO position. We discussed the role of the government in relation to Basketball. Since the formation of the KNOC the running of sports is primarily the responsibility of the federations. It was also noted that the Government primarily provides the funds for Kiribati to attend international competitions. We discussed the available basketball facilities as it is the view of the KBF that they are in need of more basketball courts. Mr. Kapiniera stated that many AusAID funded schools and Mormon Churches are built with basketball courts. Senior Sports Officer Mr. Korabi Newem is well educated and informed and I would suggest that further contact with the government in regards to sports projects with basketball be made through him.

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Deputy Secretary Minister of Sport

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KIRIBATI BASKETBALL FEDERATION (KBF)

After my arrival in Tarawa I was invited to a welcome dinner at the house of KBF President Mr. Tenoa Betene. Earlier this year there was an election of the KBF and Mr. Betene has brought some great direction and leadership to the federation, strongly supported by those in the basketball community. Attendance at the meeting also included NBDO Lotia Paul, KBF Secretary Mr. Kautu Tamakei and KBF Coach Mr. Rota Onorio.

KBF President Mr. Tenoa Betene is thankful for the support of FIBA Oceania and highlights the following milestones over the past 6 months:

1. Employed NBDO
2. Local Coach Mr. Rota Onorio to the USA on the OSEP International Coaching Enrichment Program
3. ZDO Visit

There has been a strong lift in the activity of basketball since the election of the new executive earlier this year. Mr. Betene said that it has been "quite an achievement, quite pleasing" and he is looking forward to next year and aiming at attending the Micronesian Games in Palau and also the FIBA Oceania Youth Tournament. He is also making a strong push to improve the administration levels of both the KBF and KNOC in his role as acting Secretary General. There is some confusion with the status of the previous KNOC Secretary General who seems to have been dismissed by the executive.

Some requests have been made by the KBF including:

1. A training program for the new NBDO Lotia Paul to attend.
2. For a Level 1 Coaching Course presenter to be accredited in country.
3. Rubber Basketball for use on outdoor courts as they currently have leather basketballs.
4. A Level 2 Basketball Coaching Course for those at the required level.

Mr. Rota Onorio is the preferred candidate to become a Level 1 Course Presenter as he is a leading coach in the country, has a delightful attitude and is keen to be a basketball leader. His willingness to take on this responsibility is clear. He has also recently returned from Delaware, USA where he attended the 6 week International Basketball Enrichment Program alongside Mr. Sid Guzman from Guam.

In regards to the request for a Level 2 course, this has been stated by other federations in past visits. However in this instance I cannot see that anyone other Rota Onorio and Kautu Temakei would be at the required level. I am also concerned that Kiribati Basketball is placing too much emphasis on the 'levels' rather than the development of their own coaching and practice of it. If there is no structured and well run competition for these coaches to be involved in and apply their craft then I do not see the purpose of a Level 2 course as the majority of coaching skills are developed and refined through practice and experience.

It was pleasing to see that the Community Basketball Court in Bairiki is very busy in the evenings with lights that allow people to play until late at night. This facility is owned and maintained by the National Government. It was however disappointing that on the Saturday when I visited the court there was no one using it, and I have highlighted this to the KBF and NBDO that this would be the ideal time to conduct a regular competition, perhaps a school league on a regular basis.

Communication between members of the KBF was lacking at times with assumptions that 'someone else' was organising it. I also found that I was simply not informed of some activities such as the NBDO Primary School Program and the ASOP program until some days after I had arrived which was concerning. The website had also not been updated in some time. I also have concerns in regards to the contribution of the KBF Directors as of the 2 I met, neither was in a KBF capacity.

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Kautu Tamakei
Secretary KBF (Also Coordinator of ASOP Program)
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Rota Onorio
Coach (recently attended the International Coach Enrichment Program in Delaware, USA)
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NATIONAL BASKETBALL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER (NBDO)

I worked closely with newly appointed NBDO Mr. Lotia Paul (or Joe) throughout my visit and used the opportunity to assist his activities. I found Lotia to be well motivated and works well with athletes on court. He has excellent confidence in his ability and works well in a practical situation. He initiated a Primary School Training/Introductory Program by dividing Tarawa Atoll into 4 areas and holding clinics on a daily basis at the schools in these areas over a 4 weeks period. These sessions are unfortunately only limited half an hour each by the schools, however he often has 60-70 Kids at each clinic. Although teachers help out, this is too many for one session and I suggested increasing the number sessions and working with smaller groups. A lack of suitable courts in some areas is an issue that limits basketball activities that Lotia can conduct with the children. E.g. just did passing due to lack of appropriate playing area. I have congratulated Lotia on his initiative and suggested that the next step is to conduct a Primary School Competition at the beginning of next year.

Lotia does need some improvement in his organizational skills and needs a bag to store his equipment. I provided Lotia with a whistle and rule book to assist his work and additionally 3 Basketball Polo Shirts and a set of 8 2nd hand Primary School uniform singlet's that were given to me by past FIBA Oceania AYAD Mr. Darren Thomas whilst I was in Melbourne last month. These were appreciated.

It was a priority to get Lotia using and regularly updating the KBF website. We created a sporting pulse account for him and granted him access to the site. After some simple demonstrations, Lotia wrote his first Website Story and followed up with a second on Monday 9th November. He has fair to good computer skills and I look forward to seeing greater use of the website from this time onwards.

SUMMARY

Kiribati was an interesting experience. Although productive I believe this visit could have been better utilized. I was accommodated at the Otin Taai Hotel which was rather inconveniently located a half hour drive from the KNOC office and the main Basketball Court at Bairiki. I was provided with a car which was essential due to my accommodation arrangements. I experienced a culture of people telling me what 'they think I want to hear', rather than straight forward answers which hindered progress and at times caused some frustration.

Basketball is definitely popular in Kiribati, however there does need to be more focus and encouragement towards female participation as I did notice a female soccer match being played so women are interested in sport. I am hopeful that with the recent election and newly appointed NBDO that basketball in Kiribati will continue to improve.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Saturday should be developed into 'Basketball Day' for Primary School aged students with the possible combination of a clinic in the morning followed by matches in the afternoon. E.g. 10am-12 noon Clinic, 12noon – 6pm Matches at the Bairiki Basketball Court. This court is not currently used and the period from February to June would be ideal.
2. Focus on holding regular competitions rather than short tournament that require a lot of work for only a short period of basketball. Relaxed, consistent and enjoyable basketball is required at this stage.
3. That a shift of focus and culture be placed on women's participation in basketball. It is necessary to be balanced in all aspects of basketball as competitions such as the FIBA Oceania Youth Tournament require a women's team as a criteria for admission into the Tournament.
4. NBDO lotia Paul continue his solid start to his new role by continue with his junior focus. With direction from the KBF and lotia's positive and willing attitude, quite an impact can be made from his activities.