



KIRIBATI

2010 FIBA OCEANIA ZDO VISIT

September 14 – 23, 2010

By Ryan Burns (FIBA Oceania ZDO)

INTRODUCTION

Arrived at 4pm in Tarawa on Tuesday 14th September after spending the previous night in Nadi, Fiji due to the separation in connecting flights. I was met at the airport by NBDO Mr. Iotia Paul after my arrival and was transported to my arranged accommodation at Mary's Motel. Unfortunately my room was in the 'old wing' of the motel and there were no other rooms available. This room was the worst standard of accommodation that I had ever come across in 4.5 years in the Pacific and I requested a change of accommodation. Arrangements were then made for me to stay at the Uteireri Guest House which was of a much better standard and appropriate to my requirements.

This was my 2nd visit to Kiribati and I was looking forward to it, especially as it coincided with Te Runga Kiribati National Games that are held every 2 years.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Kiribati Basketball Federation
 - Reasonably active
 - President Rota Onorio is new KNOC Secretary General
 - Need to develop objectives and a plan
- Te Runga National Games
 - Basketball played at a very low standard
 - Teams had no coaches despite previous coach training
 - Played on outdoor court because new gym was not repaired
- NBDO
 - Has been improving his skills and duties of the role
 - Is the bright shining light of Kiribati Basketball
 - Needs to take on more of a leadership role
- Trainings
 - 20 referees attended 2 x 2 hour Referee training sessions
 - 7 coaches attended brief coaching session
 - 32 Primary students attended basketball clinic
- General
 - A culture of 'wanting something for nothing'
 - An extreme lack of clear communication between people

VISIT ACTIVITIES

Activities throughout the visit included:

- Referee Training
- KBF Meeting
- Coaches Discussion
- Primary School Clinic
- FIBA Organizer Training
- Observation of National Games Basketball (Te Runga)

REFEREE/COACH TRAINING & CLINICS

On Wednesday 15th September and Thursday 16th September from 5-7pm at the Bairiki court I conducted 2 referee training sessions. The attendance was 20 (5 female) for the first session and 15 (4 female) for the 2nd session. The attendance list is attached with this report. These sessions involved both practical on court practice along with some discussion with Q & A. The limited time available to me due to the unavailability of lights for the court limited the sessions. There were only the 2 days available to conduct these sessions before the Te Runga National Games began.

On Monday 20th September a Coaching Clinic was arranged at the Bairiki court after the completion of the last game of the night. Although in discussions before this it was agreed that I would conduct a coaching clinic on court with a group of athletes to demonstrate and coaches observing, nothing was organized for this. There were no athletes arranged and the only coaches (7 males) were not really coaches but actually players from the very last game of the night that had been instructed to attend by KBF officials. Rather than go on court we had a discussion regarding the role of the coach, as from my observations of the Te Runga there was no understanding of the role of the coach. There was very much the feeling that those people were in attendance in order to keep me happy, rather than for me to help them. This was extremely disappointing and is an accurate reflection of the attitude of the basketball community in Kiribati. We did not conduct the proposed Coaches Clinic the following night because I was of the view that no one really cared.

On Tuesday 21st September from 9-10am along with NBDO lotia Paul I conducted a clinic with students from the Bairiki Primary School. This was an excellent clinic and I was extremely happy with the students. It seems to me that these Primary School students displayed better basketball attitudes than those on display at the Te Runga tournament. We focused on some basic skills such as dribbling, stopping, pivoting, shooting and match play. I must say that I was also impressed with the effort and attitude displayed by the female students which was extremely encouraging, and in stark contrast to many other Micronesian countries. There were 32 students in attendance (17 female).

KIRIBATI BASKETBALL FEDERATION (KBF)

After my arrival on Tuesday 14th September, I met with the Kiribati Basketball Federation (KBF) members 6pm at Mary's Motel for dinner. In attendance were President Mr. Rota Onorio, NBDO lotia Paul and Director Mr. Bwebwentau Lamti. At a later stage Treasurer Mrs. Tiriata M Tabuia arrived along with KNOC representative Mr. David Collins. It should be noted that since my last visit Mr. Rota Onorio has since been appointed to the position of KNOC Secretary General.

At this meeting we discussed the proposed program and the upcoming Te Runga National Games. This was a light hearted affair and enjoyed by those in attendance.

KBF Executive

President – Rota Onorio rkonorio@gmail.com

Vice President – Naunta Taatu

Secretary – Tokarei 13tokteisy@gmail.com

Treasurer – Tiriata M Tabuia mitabuia@gmail.com

Director – Bwebwentau Lamti bwenzie7@gmail.com

Director – Turia Tamwi

Mr. Kautu Tamakei

Ex NBDO & KBF Secretary

ASOP Program Coordinator

k_temakei@yahoo.com.au

Kiribati Basketball has not taken in international competition since 2003. After 7 years it is fair to say that many young people have no understanding of how the game is played outside of Kiribati and just how good players can be. This is also the case for coaches and administrators as they have no comparison from which to measure themselves against. International competition is often a great motivator for people involved in basketball and the KBF need to address this issue in order for Kiribati to develop to a competitive level in the pacific region. At this stage participation at the South Pacific Games is unrealistic and the current medium term objective should be to participate in the next Micronesian Games or Micronesian Basketball Tournament. To achieve this objective the KBF short term objective should be to gain some international exposure via most economical and practical options. Perhaps either travel to or invite teams from Nauru or Fiji. This would be the first step.

MEETINGS

Australian High Commission

A meeting with the Australian High Commissioner was arranged by NBDO Iotia Paul before my arrival. Iotia and I met with Australian High Commissioner Mr. Brett Aldam and 1st Secretary Mr. Wade Carruthers on Wednesday 15th September. I enquired into the possibility of the AHC assisting FIBA Oceania with the transportation of equipment to Kiribati, however I was informed that it was not possible due to limitations and restrictions placed on government personnel. I was disappointed that the KBF had not followed up anything with the AHC after last year's meeting with them in terms of Sporting Grant applications. These were required by the middle of 2010, but just the same as last year, the KBF has missed the application date. It looks to me as if nothing had been done in regards to this. We had a general discussion about sports during the meeting but it would have been more productive if the KBF had some sort of objective to take from this meeting as it seems they are still in the same position that they were in last year.

Mr. Brett Aldam - Australian High Commissioner

Mr. Wade Carruthers – 1st Secretary

Ph +686 21184

Ministry of Sport

I met the Kiribati Ministry of Sport, Sports Office Mr. Kourabi Nenam on Thursday 16th September. This meeting was changed from Deputy Minister as he was not available at that time, even though meeting was confirmed. We discussed the operation of Te Runga National Games format & structure as I was keen to understand how it all worked. Essentially the

Ministry of Sport oversees administration and finance whilst the National Federations provide technical aspects of the sport. This event is overseen by the Kiribati Sports Authority which is made up of a number sports representatives from government, KNOC and federations. Due to the newly built stadium in Betio needing repairs I was informed that \$192,000AUD has been allocated to carry out this maintenance. This gym used to have 15 staff, but now has 1 and has slowly been crumbling over the past year. I was told that it used to cost \$1AUD per person for access the gym but people complained to MP's so they changed it to 50c. Complaints continued and further reduced to 20c. Staff could not be paid so the staff had to be reduced. As a result maintenance, security and supervision could not be maintained and the facility has deteriorated. This is extremely disappointing, and once again is another reflection of the attitude displayed in Kiribati.

NATIONAL BASKETBALL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER (NBDO)

National Basketball Development Officer Mr. Lotia Paul is the bright and shining basketball light for Kiribati Basketball. I have been very impressed with his work as an NBDO and his improvement and development of skills over the past year. I am pleased to report that Lotia now has his drivers licence also.

During my visit Lotia demonstrated good computer skills and that he is a fast learner of administration skills. He has an excellent ability to take on new ideas and learn from others. Examples of his work that I have observed include schedules, reports, certificates, budget, website updates, radio news promotion and learning FIBA organizer.

During my visit Lotia was my main point of contact and we worked closely together and discussed issues on a daily basis. I do have concerns that Lotia does get pushed around by more senior members of Kiribati basketball and that he really needs to stand up and be a leader. He has an excellent skill base and work ethic that must be taken advantage of.

To assist him in his work Lotia would make valuable use of additional equipment such as rubber basketballs, whistles, heavy duty nets, ball bags, witches hats/cones, uniforms/bibs and shoes (possibly from the soul to soul program). I did note that a large number of participants (possibly half) did not wear any shoes during their participation in the national games.

Both the KBF and Lotia need to take advantage of the available communication options. A key one is radio which is a vital tool in the promotion of basketball activities, including courses. It was clear that there was a lack of communication in order to promote the ZDO visit in order to obtain a maximum attendance and proposed program courses. Perhaps it could be possible for Lotia to conduct a regular (weekly) basketball radio show that can provide regular updates and reports. This should be followed up.

It was disappointing that after last years ZDO visit and recommendation for regular competitions to be conducted, none have commenced so far. The Kiribati Basketball calendar is primarily the same as it has always been with Adult tournaments held during recognized holiday periods throughout the year. For Kiribati basketball to make progress consistent competitive basketball needs to be played so that players, coaches, administrators and officials are constantly active and involved. This assist with the develop of the skills of all involved and also makes a great case to potential sponsors/supporters as the federation is seen as active and strongly supported by the community. I am still amazed at how the outdoor basketball court is not used on Saturday's which seems like the perfect day to be made 'Basketball Day' in Tarawa. It is possible to hold 3 basketball seasons within the year which would be:

1. Elementary School League
2. High School League

3. Senior League

TE RUNGA NATIONAL GAMES

The 'Te Runga' Games are the Kiribati multi-sport National Games that are held every 2 years. Firstly it was extremely disappointing that newly built gymnasium was not available for basketball used for the games. This was due to poor maintenance over the past year that resulted in the roof leaking and destroying some of the floor boards. This was further impacted by the lack of inaction to have the floor repaired. I was astonished that no effort had been made to fix this problem with the floor by anyone in Kiribati. I was informed that the Ministry for Sport is responsible for the building, yet they have decided to spend \$5000AUD and wait a considerable amount of time to get it fixed. I see this as another example of Kiribati attitude, and as a result the basketball had to be played on the Bairiki outdoor court. There were a number of issues with this:

- Extremely hot sun in a highly concreted area
- Nowhere for spectators to sit and watch
- Intense glare from the court

It was pleasing to see that the rings and nets had been replaced for the games.

After my observation of many of the games at the Te Runga, I was nothing short of shocked by the standard of play. This was in particular due to the lack of effort from the players competing on the court. Players would often be just walking up and down the court with no effort, almost as if they didn't care, and this is the highest level of basketball competition in the country. It really got to a point where if the players didn't care, I didn't see any reason why I should. It became clear that the people in Kiribati play basketball for mainly social reasons as opposed to competitive ones, and this really makes me question that if Kiribati Basketball are achieving their objectives of playing social basketball, what is the purpose of having development visits here?

Another disappointing factor of the games was that after completing a Level 1 coach's course last year, none of the teams had any coach or had done any type of serious training to prepare themselves for the games. It appears to me that it is customary in Kiribati to have a very flat hierarchical structure and therefore no one feels comfortable in being a leader and taking on the role of a coach. I understand that is customary, but basketball has its own culture and customs and if Kiribati are to make any progress in their standard of play they will have to adapt their views in regards to basketball. FIBA Oceania has made regular ZDO visits to Kiribati over the years and a Level 1 Coaching Course was conducted as recently as last year. These coaches have a responsibility (which has already been outlined to them) to put what they have learned into practice. Although a coaching clinic prior to these championships was attempted there was a small turnout and even those were mainly players as opposed to coaches. KBF President has had the opportunity to develop his coaching skills on a USA Coaching Scholarship, how have these skills benefited Kiribati Basketball? Is Rota currently coaching any teams or assisting in the development of any other coaches? Strong leadership is required in this area.

There were 10 men's and 7 women's teams in the tournament, including teams that had travelled from outer islands.

Both the Kiribati Sports Authority (KSA) who were the organizers of the games and the KBF need to outline what their objectives for the games are. It appeared to me that the objective of the games included political aspects, however this does not mean that sports objectives cannot be included. For example, are the games a part of the selection process / trial for an upcoming international event? Surely this would assist in lifting the effort displayed on the court. If the KBF would like for participants to demonstrate competitive attitudes in the sport of basketball then

they themselves must be prepared in a technical manner to administer the games. There was no technical meeting held for the games to discuss rules and procedures of the tournament. There was no formulation of tournament rules adopted for the games in writing. With a coming together of people from various parts of the country it is reasonable to expect that not everyone has an understanding of the rules of the game. These games were an excellent opportunity to educate people about the game of basketball. The appointment of a technical committee is crucial to the event's smooth running, and to support this a 'jury of appeal' should also be appointed to adjudicate on any matters that are appealed. This jury should be made up of 1 representative from each team, and any deliberation would not involve jury members of the team(s) concerned.

SUMMARY

This visit was just as frustrating as last year's visit and there is a strong culture of people wanting something for nothing. The lack of communication is astounding and really limits what can be achieved. Essentially the basketball community of Kiribati are going to get out what they put in, which currently is not very much. As I explained to NBDO Lotia Paul, basketball is a team sport that requires the cooperation of many people for it to be played and enjoyed. Without this cooperation and contribution from a number of different people then the game will not progress. So essentially the future of the game is in the hands of the people that choose to play. From my observation there are really only 4 or 5 people who are making any meaningful contribution. When players on the court cannot be bothered to put in any effort, then they obtain very little from the game.

It needs to be considered that although no stating it, Kiribati Basketball may already be achieving its objectives as determined by the basketball community. That is playing fun and social basketball with no desire to achieve anything more. There is strong culture here in Kiribati of relying on outside aid managing those associated with it.

VISIT NOTES

- I stayed at the Uteireri Guest House which was suitable for my stay
- I was provided with a hire car for the duration of my visit

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That future ZDO visits to Kiribati be a maximum of 1 week, or perhaps even 5 days as the 9/10 day visit is too long for any visitor to maintain the required level of enthusiasm.
2. The KBF make clear what its objectives are and a plan on how to achieve them.
3. That the KBF take some leadership and authority with the conducting of its activities. The 'keep everyone happy' approach will not assist in the development of basketball.
4. Lotia take greater advantage of communication options such as radio and internet and make enquiries to the possibility of conducting a weekly basketball radio show.
5. Saturday be used as the Basketball Day in Tarawa with regular competitions held throughout the year.

6. Develop competition rules, appoint technical committee and jury of appeal for future tournaments.
7. KBF President Mr. Rota Onorio put the coaching skills he has developed to good use by assisting other members of Kiribati Basketball to improve their skills.