

The 1987 RURAL ALL – Da COSTA CUP Team CAMP

The ALL D Training Camp was set to kick off at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday morning at G C Foster College for Sport in St. Catherine. There would be two sessions daily with meals provided three times per day. On arrival at GC, I settled into the designated coaches' quarters and awaited the arrival of St. Elizabeth Technical football Coach Wendell Downswell and Team manager Mike Ollivierre, also of STETHS.

As time approached to start the first session there was neither Downswell nor Ollivierre in sight. I felt a bit of anxiety and wondered what I had really gotten involved into...after all, the All daCosta team were the Defending Champions. There was 'something to defend'. I proceeded to get the Camp started with the roughly twenty -odd players who had made themselves available with the value of Psychological AND Physical preparation... for a most significant match to be played one week from the day.

Within the first hour of training I realized that this was the first time in my coaching in Jamaica that I encountered so many players who were technically and tactically advanced. The morning session was brisk and competitive. The lunch break revealed the high quality nutritional input by the College, and as the days progressed, it was the steady supplies of the kitchen that brought calm to the camp. **No one could "eat out the kitchen"**. The evening session was more combative as my drills and small-sided games brought each player to the top of their game. I looked forward to seeing Downswell and Ollivierre in the morning giving them the benefit of the doubt as it related to travelling. I also looked forward to the morning session as the technical level and motivation of players was infectious.

Sunday morning began with another healthy breakfast and a competitive training session. Still no sight of my assistant or manager. At the lunch break, I got wind that coach Downswell who was still in the player-mode was at the Reno FC match and would appear on Monday morning. I assumed that Ollivierre would also appear. With time seemingly drifting closer to the first and only practice match scheduled against Humble Lions FC of Clarendon on the Wednesday, I

could not wait until the arrival of Downswell to introduce a system and style of play to the players.

The Sunday evening training session was keen and exciting as players battled to impose their talents in full - field play leaving me quite pleased with the level of play demonstrated by both teams. I realized that this would be a very difficult team to select but assumed that it should be less difficult with the inputs of coach Downswell and manager Ollivierre. There would be a rather dramatic turn of events come the Monday morning with the arrival of the 'western contingent'

The texture of the training camp changed dramatically with the arrival of the bulk of the Da Costa Cup champions Ruseas led by the *most feared defender* in school boy football Marvin 'Hagler', the ultra-fit Steve 'Shorty' Malcolm, the perceptive Hector Wright (Herbert Morrison), goal keeper Warren Barrett (Cornwall), and a host of western players. The camp immediately became a "battle-field" – and by the end of the morning session...it was evident that many players who had "impressed" on Saturday and Sunday were put into retreat.

The Russians, led by striker Michael Graham injected a "new level" of energy and aggression that lifted the All-D squad to a real 'national level'. I always considered the All D squad as representing 12 parishes versus the All Manning who represented 2 parishes. I always felt that I had the best collection of the 'broader nation'. The number of players had grown to 35, the level of aggression stepped up 110%, and Downswell and Ollivierre made their belated appearance. I was really glad to see some support in this venture as the Media had already picked up the 'buzz' that surrounded the annual clash between the top school boy players. I hoped that I was not really being set- up for a 'major footballing disaster' that would put a serious dent on my reputation.

I briefed Downswell on what I had done, and introduced him to the 4-3-3 style of two-touch play that the players had embraced with the 'key feature /difference' being usage of what I had defined as the 'attacking link' and strong overlapping 'wing back play' led by Steve Shorty Malcolm) that would be "tested" in two days' time away against Clarendon First Division team Humble Lions FC

The Russian's feared central defender Mark 'Hagler' Wilson reported to the camp with a "knee-problem" it was said picked up in the inter zone round of play...and was unwilling to train on arrival. Hagler would pose a challenge to the 'disciplined order' in place since the first training session on Saturday morning and attempted to 'have his own way'. Downswell and Ollivierre basically watched the morning session from the touch lines and were brought into the field to help organize the goal keepers with Clive Ninja Smith and Warren Barrett in contest. Hagler chose to 'walk around the field' and would have some brief 'chit-chats' with both Downswell and Ollivierre each time he would pass them. I observed while coaching in the game with the A team vs. B team...fully aware that the only practice match was on the horizon.

At the end of the session, I asked Downswell what was Hagler's problem and was again reminded of his 'knee problem'. I informed Downswell that he should let Hagler know that if he didn't train with the team I would find no place for him in the practice match in Clarendon vs. Lions.

In the Monday evening session, Hagler reported to the field but refused to participate in the drills citing swelling in his knee. After dinner I called a meeting to integrate both Ollivierre and Downswell into the strategic planning and development of the squad, and to outline my plan of action to counter the challenge posed by this key defender. The following morning, Hagler reported to the field but chose to engage in some sort of "individual jogging" around the field. I used the opportunity to jog alongside Hagler, ask about his 'knee problem' while letting him know that "no train, no play". Downswell and Ollivierre integrated themselves quickly into the scheme of things and embraced the system of play that would be tested. I spent some extra time preparing the attacking style of the team to play 'without' Wilson; organizing the center of the defense by bringing in Edwin Allen's Y Brown.

FIRST TEST

On our journey to the venue in St. Catherine, I deliberately withheld naming of the starting team at the training base and was pretty sure that most players had their 'version' of who would make the squad and who would be returning

home in the morning. It was also the general feeling that the 'heart' of the All D defense would revolve around the 'uncompromising' Mark 'Hagler' Wilson...including Hagler himself.

On entering the venue, the bus found a cool spot to park and a small team talk ensued. I outlined the importance of the match and its relation to Saturday's fixture. At the end I named the starting lineup for the match. I usually outline my team from the goalkeeper/back out to the forwards/front. But for the effect I desired I began from the front (with the strikers), then the midfielders, the goalkeeper, and the back four. I named both full backs, the sweeper and left the position of 'man-marker' for the last ...allowed for the named starting players to start collecting their gear, then announced the name of the player from Edwin Allen...Y. Brown...as my man-marker. There was a quiet gasp in the bus as the 'feared one' had been left out. The players named were already dressed and were able to leave directly from the bus onto the playfield to begin their 'warm-ups' for the game.

I observed the grimace on Hagler's face and the smile on the faces of Downswell and Ollivierre who were apprised of my intentions and motivations. The 'western contingent' had no time to express any level of dissent at the omission of their comrade. Before Humble Lions could make their 'first roar', the All D team playing at a very high tempo stunned the Lions and their supporters with a sweet build up that was finished in deadly fashion. The quick strike settled the All D Team who would go into early cruise-control and to a morale boosting 1-0 victory over seasoned major league campaigner Humble Lions. The match allowed for several changes to facilitate viewing players who would make up the bench as well as those who would go home.

I was later made to understand that the then chairman of ISSA, who was visible on the sidelines had moved next to Downswell to ask for an explanation why the star attraction 'Hagler' was not in the line-up. Radcliffe asked Wendell 'Dovey' Downswell: "why no Hagler?". Downswell replies: "You have to ask Mr. D". Radcliffe then moves down the touchline to ask Ollivierre, "Why Hagler not playing"? Ollivierre replies: "You have to ask Mr. D". Radcliffe asks me "no question" but observes an "easy victory" over grown men. Interestingly, a

planned in-studio discussion on RJR's popular Sport Talk Call-in program "Sports Call" with All Manning coach Halliman and the All D coach never materialized. I suspect 'cultural politics' at play.

On returning to G C Foster, the unpleasant decision regarding which players would be sent home loomed heavily on my mind. Downswell and Ollivierre agreed to be a part of this process but both agreed and insisted that I should be the bearer of the message. At GC, the flow of food continued unabated with players skipping meals unable to put away the abundance that was available. Everybody retired in a somewhat apprehensive mood : celebrating our first victory while awaiting the judgment with the rising of the sun.

At around 5:00 a.m. on Thursday morning, coach Downswell comes into my room, wakes me up, and tells me to look outside my window and tell him what do I see. I grabbed my glasses and peered through what appeared to be darkness. I saw nothing! Then Downswell pointed to a figure moving through the mist and around the playfield at a fairly brisk pace, I could not make it out, but as it moved down the touchlines towards the dormitory buildings I saw a hooded figure ...I looked at Downswell...to say "a who dat"? And with a big smile on his face, he said, "Yes, is Hagler dat". POINT MADE! From that moment, Downswell and Ollivierre would begin to call me 'Doc'. The decision to reduce the squad from 35 to 18 would become the prerogative of Doc Don D.

The selection of 18 players from a pool of 35 chosen from 12 parishes was overwhelming considering that all the players were technically proficient and wherein the talent so deep. I was actually of the opinion that the All D 'B' team could have over powered the All Manning team which made it all the more painful to send home. From the three Titchfield players invited to the camp, only goal keeper Clive Ninja Smith survived.(Gordon and Williams were released on the Monday)

The nucleus of the team was built around the Russian 'aggregation'. Personal ratings of goal keepers puts Smith of Titchfield ahead of Barrett of Cornwall but 'politics of the west' makes Barrett goal keeping choice for Saturdays match.

CONCERT

With reduction of squad completed, manager Mike Ollivierre, also known in soca music as *Lord Have Mercy* suggested the use of a player concert / show to bring out the cultural talents within the players and to bring greater synergy and cooperation among all and sundry. It worked like a charm. My contribution to the show was my reading of a poem titled "THE PUNANIE" ...from Black USA Poetry Volume 2...and it tear down the place!

The team rested on Friday morning. On Friday evening team goes to National Stadium for final practice session. Curiously, the Opposing All - Manning Cup team coach Leebert Halliman appears on sidelines to observe squad going through its final paces. I alerted Downswell to Halliman's presence and he agrees to a few alterations in the training plan for the evening. The players are informed and the session was cut short as I was unwilling to allow Halliman to even 'get a glimpse' of the quality players nor the tactics being rehearsed for the big showdown the next evening (on Saturday).

The Real Test: NORTHERN FORD CUP

On a balmy Saturday evening January 9 1988, two magnificent goals by Rusea's Fabian Lawrence and Troy Campbell of Cornwall College enabled defending champions All daCosta to score a come-from-behind 2-1 extra time win in the Northern Ford Cup play-off at the National Stadium.

The All daCosta were the first to settle with Herbert Morrison's Hector Wright, later named the Most Outstanding Player, distributing well in midfield. The All Manning team with Errol Lewis, Roderick Lawrence and Devon Reid responded to the challenge with goalkeeper Marvin Chin holding the All da Costa team at bay. In the 22nd minute, the All Manning team scores first as Kingston College's Herbert Richards put the corporate aggregation in front.

Centre half Eugene Williams passed to Richards on the right. Richards relayed to Reid who crossed to the centre. Errol Lewis headed the cross to the far post and Richardson rushed in to kick into the roof of the net past an uncertain Warren Barrett in the All da Costa goal. Amidst the noise and jubilation of the

partisan crowd, a composed All daCosta team continued to maintain their *rhythm and focus*. A good three-man movement between Wright, Campbell and Henry ended with a perfect cross from the right that found Lawrence at the edge of the six yard box.. The Ruseas forward picked his spot and headed powerfully goal wards out of reach of a flat-footed Chin putting both teams level at 1-1, just on the stroke of half time. The stadium buzzed with excitement anticipation a rousing second half display by both teams. The crowd would not be disappointed!

At the resumption, the All Manning team made one change bringing on Leroy Harding for an injured defender Robert Small. This change seem to affect the rhythm of the Corporate Area team. The All Rural team took control with Wright engineering good through passes to Herbert Morrison's Tonto Henry who was off- target on several occasions. Both teams made changes with ten minutes to go to full time. Christopher Dias replaced Reid for the All Manning team and dribbling ace Mark Carter of Vere Technical came on for Henry.

There was a moment when the All da Costa team went down to 10 men with a knee injury to striker Fabian Lawrence. I was allowed to enter the field to check on the condition of Lawrence. After a quick on field assessment, it was decided that a stretcher be brought on to attend to what looked like a 'disjointed knee'. I asked both wing players to operate as twin strikers while Lawrence was taken into the "McDonald tunnel". I could not immediately decide whether or not to make a substitution as Lawrence did say to me, "Coach, mi soon come back". While play resumed I made a very slow walk back to the bench fully aware that target-man fellow Russian striker Michael 'Jim Dandy' was warming up.

I noticed however that in the brief period (3-5 minutes) playing with 10 players, the All daCosta team took *full control* of match with fluid and dynamic combination passing and strong over lapping runs from left full back Steve 'Shorty' Malcolm of Ruseas, harmonized with strong and effective defensive play led by the Russian defensive pair of Hagler and team captain Gibbs and a settled Barrett in goal. To add spice to the rejuvenated All daCosta Cup play, to a large and mighty roar from the large and boisterous crowd, many glued to their seats... bursting out of the tunnel was Fabian Lawrence....who sprinted out of the half way line and awaited the signal of the referee to re-enter the game. The crowd

went wild! I recognized at that moment that with the dominance being displayed would be intensified with an additional player to the front line and would put the All D aggregation to a level of ascendancy that signaled the demise of the All Manning team.

The deadlock was broken in the 101st minute after substitute, dribbling ace Mark Carter of Vere had the All Manning team in complete disarray with his wily dribbling...Troy Campbell fired through a wall of All Manning defenders for the winning goal.

At the end of the match I was congratulated and interviewed by sport announcer Lance Whittaker in the McDonald tunnel and shared my views with him concerning keeping the core of these two squads together to build a strong national unit. My post-game analysis was published in the Form of a Letter to the Sports Editor in which I outlined why the All School's aggregation should be 'kept together'. It was the likes of 1987 All daCosta Cup team players Warren Barrett, Hector Wright, Steve 'shorty' Malcolm, et al that formed the backbone of the successful 1998 Reggae Boyz Road to France World Cup Campaign.

Unfortunately I was unable to enjoy the celebration party for this GREAT VICTORY which took place when the players returned to base at GC Foster. With no personal transport on hand, I was unable to make the trip across to Spanish Town with the team (to GC Foster College) which left assistant coach Wendell Downswell as the spokesman for the success.

The **Sunday Gleaner of January 10, 1988** Sport headlines screamed:

All daCosta retain Northern Ford in extra time. The Wendell Downswell coached All DaCosta cup team.....blah, blah, blah

The media credited Downswell as the architect of the victory and moved the 'football powers' to reward him with a football coaching scholarship to Germany. I was never mentioned in the Press as the HEAD COACH of the ALL D aggregation. Aluta continua!

I was driven from the stadium back to Harbour View by friend Louis Ruddock with the intention to return next morning to Port Antonio, wife and children. It was indeed a very long week from family and school but a highly rewarding and successful engagement with the best group of players I have ever coached. Strangely enough, this is the first (only) team that I have ever coached and don't have a team picture to show.

I rested in Harbour View and prepared to return to Port Antonio to resume my substantial job at Titchfield. **The success achieved from coaching the All da Costa Cup Team to successfully defend the Northern Ford remains one of the highlights of many years of coaching at the secondary school level.** My return to 'base', at Titchfield was, to say the least, "chilly". My wife was 'neurotically upset' that I was 'away' for *one whole week*. The community of Port Antonio was taken a-back. That the Rasta Man was the Head Coach of the Victorious All Da Costa Cup Team "poured scorn" on the HEADS of my detractors and critics of the 'dread at the control'...and proved too much for the 'town-talkers' to digest. My return from the successful All D Campaign, was made 'perplexing' when the principal Mr. Chin suggested that, "I was 'big enough' ...and that I (can leave now) didn't have to stay around here." I did not take Bunghi's advice literally or seriously. In hindsight, it would appear that Bunghi Chin was quite knowledgeable of the plans that were underfoot to bring a change to the football Coaching leadership at the school.

Shortly thereafter, the principal was instructed by the newly appointed school board chairman, president of Portland cricket association ,former president of Portland football association and politician' (JLP councilor) Hue Perry to "remove the dread" from the helm of football at Titchfield...with the word spread around the streets that "Mr. Davis have too much power". To my complete astonishment, Mr. Chin responded to the 'fight' by saying," Mr. Davis, give them, gidden mek dem mash it up! " I was stunned. Did I just hear the principal say..."give them the Titchfield team"? Bunghi Chin, it appeared, seemed tired of having to 'fight to defend me' and surrendered to the 'forces' that detest the idea of achieving success with the RASTAMAN DON D at the helm. The Titchfield team would be turned over to a science teacher named D. Taylor with

'maximum support' from the Town. The 1988 season was marked by the 'overwhelming support' for the team led by the 'forces' of the Town Talkers and ended in SHAME and DISGRACE when for the first time in history of Titchfield's participation in the Da Costa Cup, the team would completely fail to 'leave the zone' Qualify for the inter-zone round.

Taylor was "hounded out of town" by his ('overwhelming support') ending his teaching and BRIEF coaching career at Titchfield high, to seek refuge in the furthest western parish of Jamaica.

Excerpt taken from soon to be released FOOTBALL BIOGRAPHY titled:
My RENDEZVOUS With KING PELE: From Harbour View to the New York
COSMOS and B[I]ack