

THE TRUE BELIEVERS STRUT IT WITH THE SAINTS IN COLORADO

December 2013

From our man on the Ground... Ian 'Robbo' Robertson

It was amazing being with the Mighty Saints in Colorado made extra special by being with my 16 year old son, Mackie.

There were only six "corporates" which included Mackie and me, the Saints dentist Larry and his son Jordan and two army guys. The army guys had been injured in Afghanistan a year before and were included in the week as part of the "Soldier On" program.

Being such a small group meant it was quite intimate.
I thought the best strategy was to be a fly on the wall and observe..... That probably lasted 24 hours.

We were on the flight over to the USA with the team and coaches. It is a bit confusing when you arrive in L A and it is 19 hours behind Melbourne so you arrive 5 hours before the time you left.

The first American experience for some of the players and us was to try the culinary delights of a workers cafe as we had to kill time for 7 hours. The place would make Coles cafeteria look like Vue De Monde. Basically everything is deep fried; I think they would deep fry a watermelon if they could get it into the basket.

We finally arrived in Boulder that afternoon and settled into our hotel rooms ready for the week to come.

The general formula and routine for players is to get up and do tests in the morning including urine sample for hydration, blood test for whatever and a pinch test to see whether you are carrying too much fat. ***I thought to myself: hydration has never been a problem for me; blood test irrelevant and pinch test I could take a leadership role in this area.***

After the tests, breakfast is had by everyone and then a team meeting to discuss important matters and set the agenda for the day. There was a notice whiteboard board which also gave information on the days affairs which had a "quote of the day" section on it. One morning it was blank and I thought what a great opportunity to have some input and texted ***"the biggest risk in life is not taking a risk"*** I came back a short time later and found it had been rubbed off and thought maybe that is why I am not coaching a football team.



Day one meeting, we were called upon to stand out the front and introduce ourselves to the team. I was going to say how disappointed I have been, being over looked in the draft for the past 40 years, but forgot and only talked about the ***True Believers and how successful the coterie group has been and one of the strongest in the AFL in just 3 years.***

The training started gradually with a workout in one of the Colorado College Grit iron teams Gym which was massive and thought I was in a shopping centre selling gym equipment. Then they went into the climate controlled Dome for skill sessions, this was the first time to see the new recruits in action.

Jack Billings
Luke Dunstan
Blake Acres
Luke Delaney
Billy Longer

No. 3 Draft
No. 18 draft
No. 19 Draft
Ex North Melbourne Backman
Brisbane Ruckman

To name a few... And didn't they look good!!

Day two consisted of the usual morning preparation and then bus to the reserve for a mountain walk and then a 4 kilometre time trial run. Geary was a machine and won with a time of 15 mins 50 seconds. It was my first responsibility where I was the time keeper for team 4 and carried it out with complete aplomb.



TRUE BELIEVERS



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From here the exercise regime started to ramp up. Gym exercises, drills in Dome and swimming in the pool. I forgot to mention the players that failed the pinch test had to do extra training which was called the "Fat Club". This was a club I knew I belonged without the pinchers going near me.

One of the afternoons Mackie and I left the dome training session with the thought to do a quick jump in the freezing stream, (players had been doing it) just to see what it was like.

Just as we were nearing the stream Nick Reiwolt appeared with towel over shoulder and we were in a problematic situation when he was delighted that we were to join him in a 4 min dip. ***The 4 mins was bouncing around my cerebellum like a rogue chainsaw running amuck, then I heard my mouth say something like "that would be fantastic" and in we went.***

The situation was not helped by the fact that Nick's knees come up to my shoulder blades and my sensitive area was experiencing the icy waters not far after his big toes. Within a min I was hugging a boulder on the side of the stream for mental strength. ***By the time the rest of the team arrived I had formed a star fish position on the side of the rock..... not one of my finest hours.***

The training programs are fairly brutal and you have to lift your hats to the dedication and will power of the players. For example on day 6 they were bussed to a nearby mountain and the program consisted of the following:

- 30 second sprint up the mountain; then
- 60 second sprint up the mountain; then
- 90 second sprint up the mountain

All of which are conducted in a competitive situation giving their one hundred % effort, this was not done once but a five times.

I was asked whether I wanted to go to the hills and my reply was that ***one must listen to one's body and my body was saying it needs to go shopping.*** I know I would have been be calling for a cab after the first 15 seconds.

The new coach Alan Richardson (Richo) if you don't have a name that rhymes with an "O" or an "E" in a football club you are in trouble. So Richo was off to a good start.

Actually I had a coffee with him and had to draw on my experience being appointed assistant team coach of the U/9 Vampires team to understand what he was going through.

Seriously, from my humble opinion he has got the place humming and put simply they are all great blokes from players, coaches and support team.

Stay tuned for an exciting period of time with the Saints as they become the Mightiest.

Special thanks to Scott Ellis for looking after us and Paul Hudson (Hudo) who took Mackie and Jordan on a football Clinic including video's slow mo's etc.

It was a time that Mackie and I will never forget.

Go the Mighty Saints!!!!

