

## All White Now!

### All Whites 1 World Champions 1

#### World Cup 2010 Group F Pool Match



It's a glorious winter's morning as we walk the empty streets on our way to the second meeting of the All Whites supporters club's Buenos Aires branch. Wife Sandra and daughter Natalia have no work or school today and we are expecting a big turnout for the biggest game of Football in All White history.

Today's match against Italy is the All Whites second pool F match and after the sensational draw against Slovakia we wonder if maybe, just maybe, we might be able to sneak a result against the World Champions.

Our meeting place is the downtown San Martin plaza where there is a giant screen as well as a World Cup museum. Conditions are perfect on this Fathers day Sunday. We arrive at the plaza, find a good spot on the grassy bank, and meet up with other flag waving and black shirted Kiwis. All up there are about 25 of us today as we stand for the national anthems and then sit on the grass in the warm sun.

The game kicks off and we have hardly had time to settle down when the All Whites win a free kick just in Italy's half. Simon Elliot takes the kick and sends a cross curving towards the right hand post where as against Slovakia Winston Reid is lurking. This time though Reid's deft glance puts the ball into space where Shane Smeltz pounces and smashes it into the net. GGGGOOOOOOAAAALLLLL!!! We leap

to our feet and shout, jump, and go crazy as the All Whites stun the four time World Champions. Amazing, incredible, unbelievable! After just seven minutes the All Whites lead 1-0 and all we need to do is hold on for another 83!

Time passes very slowly and nerves are getting frayed when on 27 minutes a shot from Italy's Montolivo beats Goalie Mark Paston and hammers into New Zealand's right hand post before miraculously running across the face of the open goal. What a let off! Here in Buenos Aires Chris, who as a youngster played alongside Ricki Herbert, says he feels that luck is on our side today. We sure hope so!

Then disaster strikes. From a corner on the left Italy swing the ball in and after a bit of argy bargie in the penalty box an Italian takes a dive. We are sure the ref has seen this unsporting act as he reaches for a yellow card but horror of horrors he books Kiwi defender Tommy Smith and awards a penalty! The replay shows that De Rossi's dramatic dive has duped the ref and there is nothing Paston can do as Iaquina gives Italy an undeserved parity on the 30 minute mark.

The next 15 minutes take an age to pass but pass they do and the halftime whistle goes with the 78<sup>th</sup> ranked All Whites holding the champs 1-1. What a game! It's a relief to take stand up, stretch and let out the odd nervous laugh or two.

Back live and only another 45 minutes to go! Only! The All Whites defend bravely as wave after wave of Italian attack sees numerous free kicks and corners conceded. Its heart in mouth stuff as Captain Ryan Nelson leads mightily from the back and puts his body on the line time and time again. The clock is ticking 50 minutes, 60 minutes, 70 minutes. So far so good, bloody good in fact!

There is lots of diving and rolling around in agony by the Italians but the All Whites are unfazed as the defence holds tight as Paston pulls off a couple of miracle saves. 80 minutes gone and just 10 to go. Could it be, can we do it? Italy is getting frustrated and corners are overcooked and picked off by the Kiwi defenders. Teenager Chris Wood has replaced yellow carded Rory Fallon and he almost scores with a great effort that slips past the far post. 5 minutes to go now!

Time is dragging, seconds take an eternity but then suddenly normal time is up. Here at Plaza San Martin a couple of Kiwi kids play in blissful ignorance as their parents sweat and stress and will their team on. Four minutes of additional time are to be played and Italy keep pressing forward looking for the winner. 91 minutes, 92 minutes, another Italian free kick is belted as far up field as possible by Nelson, 93 minutes. The All Whites win a throw in. The throw in is kicked straight out and the final whistle goes!! WWHHHOOOO!! YYYEEHHHAAAHHHH!! It's all over and a bunch of Kiwis go mad in Buenos Aires letting out all the tension that has been held inside. We can hardly believe it. What a game. What courage. The All Whites have held on to make history and draw 1-1 with World Champions Italy.

In the warm sun on this Fathers day Sunday we laugh, shake hands and high five as our heart rates start to normalize. We wear big goofy grins from the adrenalin and tension of these history making 94 minutes. A local film crew comes over and asks us if we were nervous during the match? Were we worried? Not at all we answer! Yeah Right!

Slowly and reluctantly this group of local and visiting Kiwis disperses looking forward to the next game and next get together. We head to home or hostel with a great feeling of pride inside. Sandra, Natalia and I wander off along the world's widest avenue the twelve lane Avenida 9 de Julio and arrive at the obelisk where Argentine fans congregate to celebrate football victories. There is nobody celebrating today and the downtown streets are deathly quiet but in one of the great capitals of world football a tiny footballing nation unknown to many has just put itself firmly on the map.

## Vamos Nueva Zelanda!

### History Never Repeats?

20<sup>th</sup> June 1987 – All Blacks win the Rugby World Cup

20<sup>th</sup> June 2010 – All Whites draw with World Champions Italy

Head to Head	Italy	New Zealand
Football Pedigree	Won 4 World Cups	2nd time at finals
Professional Players	3,541	25
World Ranking	5	78
Shots	23	3
Corners	15	0
<b>Goals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>





