

April 28

Day 6

Greetings! My name is Jeff Strickland and as Captain of the 1991 Region IV team, I have been asked to write an account of our day. Today we did something a bit different and woke up, not at the crack of dawn, which is anything before 7:30 for us 17 year olds, but instead were allowed to sleep in until 8 am. We started off the day like usual, had a typical breakfast meal made for us that consisted of bread, butter, jelly, and some meat. After breakfast we headed to the train station to get on a train heading to Venice. We settled in for the 1-hour trip. When we got to Venice there were groovy picturesque buildings and narrow streets greeting us. We spilt into groups and casually walked around the city. Most groups wondered around and stopped at stores. A few people bought post card to send to family members because everything else was too expensive. All groups found their way to San Marco Square, which took the breath away from everyone.

The church was the main attraction in the square. A select few of us decided to visit the inside of the church but were disappointed when we read the sign that said no pictures. However, the opportunity to take in such a special combination of beauty and architecture. Another big hit was the pigeon feeding in the square itself. Many of the players enjoyed trying to feed the pigeons and spent a good amount of time trying to get them to flock to their teammates, most of the time it did not work.

Everyone then had to walk back to the train station before 5:45 pm. Some of us guessed where the train station was and found our way, but others, like those guided by the intellect of Brett Finkelstein, were able to pinpoint the location of the train station on their map. While waiting for the train, looking for amusement, Dakota Collins put on a show for passers by, by doing back flips, singing, and jumping jacks. After getting on the train, within 2 minutes everybody was asleep. Overall it was a good cultural and social learning event.

April 29

Day 7

Today was a fantastic day and provided some very memorable experiences. The good weather, which had blessed the previous days excursion to Venice, was replaced with a steady rain more reminiscent of the Pacific Northwest rather than the typical temperate fare of the Friuli Region. After a light walk through and pregame meal, the team traveled to San Vito where the boys enjoyed a great time as they were able to take part in a very interesting take on tournament play. The team entered a six team mini event with CSKA Moscow, Deportivo Cali, Bulleen FC, Region I, Atlas, and of course Region IV. The team was grouped with Bulleen FC and Deportivo Cali and played each in two 40-minute games. The first contest was against the Australians and Region IV wasted no time in scoring a goal through Nic Ryan through a great assist from Eric Anderson.

Bulleen equalized, as they were able to break through the left side and slot a ball underneath a charging Joey Pacheco. After the goal, the team pressed but was unable to find another goal and the game ended in 1-1 draw. Based on the rules of the event, the game went straight to PK's. Anthony Salciccia, Jeff Strickland, Nic Ryan, Juan Rivera, and GK Joey Pacheco all made their spot kicks and Joey Pacheco provided the final heroics as he saved the third and the sixth kick to give Region IV the win. After a ten-minute break the team then played Deportivo Cali from Colombia. The game proved a very physical and fast paced affair and looked to turn against the Region IV boys in the 14th minute as Cali were awarded a PK. Brett Finklestein answered the call and made a sprawling save to his left to keep the game level. The game went back and forth and Cali finally broke through in the 28th minute as a scramble in the 18 was not cleared and the Colombians were finally able to beat Finklestein. The answer to the Cali goal was immediate as Dakota Collins broke through on the ride side and curled a great service for Anthony Salciccia to head past a helpless GK. The game ended 1-1, thus sending the Colombians through as the group winners even before the PK shootout, which Cali won 4-1. Despite finishing second in the group, the team was buoyed by the news they would get a chance to play Russian giant CSKA Moscow in the final game of the trip on April 30th. With any luck the weather will return to form and provide a beautiful setting for the final day of competition.