

FIELDSTORIES

July 16, 2010



Vuvuzelas: The world's soundtrack this past month!

Ke Nako...The Time Is Now! 2010 World Cup Unites South Africa

It is impossible to describe the power of what has unfolded in the Rainbow Nation over the past month. Hosting, participating in, and celebrating the greatest spectacle within sport, the FIFA 2010 World Cup, was a collective experience beyond measure.

Historians and pundits the world over are still searching for words to describe what it meant for South Africa (and Africa as a continent by extension) to host the World Cup, let alone the wildly successful party they just threw for the world over.

Less than a week after a Final Match that saw Spain rightfully continue to reign as World Champions (in addition to European Champions), it is as if a collective quiet has descended upon this nation. "What now?" is

a common query these days, as if a nation of almost 50 million people don't quite know how to return to life as normal.

And that is the beautiful thing.

Life has slowly but surely shifted over the past month of sharing 'the beautiful game' with the world. Living in a country beset with problems that make up a collective weariness in the world's mind (rampant unemployment, poverty, the highest HIV/AIDS rate in the world), it is hard not to look with despair at my work here as a missional agent of grace. And yet, South Africa is changing.

Mark Gevisser of The Guardian sums it up perfectly: "We won" most of all, because we could finally say "we." Something shifted during the World Cup: with a team to support and

half a million guests to take care of, we found ourselves all on the same side. The festive buzz of a million vuvuzelas came to override the habitual sounds of urban anxiety: the gunfire; the helicopters chasing stolen cars; the aggressive minibus taxis. Sure, it was holiday-time: daily matches, skiving from work, the cities aglitter with flags and foreigners. Still, for the first time in South Africa's history, it seemed, patriotism was not a political statement. South Africans were waving flags, and supporting their team out of a sense of joy and belonging, rather than the deficit-driven pride that has fuelled both Afrikaner and African nationalism for so long"

Something is changing, and I cannot be more excited to play a role in that transformation...

“I Was There!” Top 2010 World Cup Memories

- Landon Donovan’s extra time goal to shock Algeria at the end of group play, thrust the US men into the winner’s seat on top of Group C, and announce to the world that the US are players in the world game. As Bill Simmons wrote in a fantastic article on the World Cup (<http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/page2/story?page=simmons/100701>), “Soccer is no longer taking off. It’s here....[the US shared] a collective American sports experience unlike anything since Lake Placid.” Sitting with my colleague Luc Kabongo of InnerChange South Africa in the stands during this moment, and the wild celebration that followed as the entire US team dove on the corner flag was unlike anything I have ever witnessed in sports. A truly transcendent moment that solidified a growing obsession I have with ‘the beautiful game.’ Malcolm Gladwell would truly call this a ‘Tipping Point’ in soccer’s place in the US sports calendar.
- The opening match between South Africa and Mexico where I joined up to 50,000 other South Africans in a local fan park in Soshanguve to celebrate the draw with Mexico! I have never before thought I would be in a semi riot, but when Tshabalala scored that goal in the 57th minute, oh my goodness! Let’s just say that in the rush of vuvuzela blowing (I LOVE THEM!) and dancing, a little boy got shoved into my lap in the chaos for the rest of the match. Priceless!

“I knew Africa was changing, but making the continent’s case in print was not the same as banishing the ingrained doubt in my mind. It took an opening whistle to do that. If the big idea behind staging the World Cup in Africa was to change outside perceptions of the continent, the surprise bonus is that it has allowed Africans to believe in themselves. The arrival of hundreds of thousands of fans was sudden, giant, cacophonous confirmation. And just as our faith caught up with our facts, it got better. South Africa scored a beautiful first goal. Ghana beat the U.S. to reach the quarterfinals. Hardly a crime was reported...Years of agonizing challenges no doubt lie ahead for Africa. But for a month, we’ve been living something wondrously different. At a rock concert in Soweto the night before the opening game, Desmond Tutu tried to put it into words. ‘Can you feel it?’ he exclaimed. ‘You can touch it! It’s unbelievable! I am in a dream!’ He was-I think-talking about Africa’s future. It is here.”

[Alex Perry, “Africa’s Future.” TIME July 19th, 2010]

USA! USA! USA!

The passion and knowledge of the USA fans in attendance as they faced Algeria was unlike any USA sporting experience I have ever taken part in. Soccer fans are fanatical about our boys, and I couldn’t be prouder to have witnessed such a historic moment as Landon Donovan’s extra time goal to send the US to the top of Group C and onto the Round of 16 in World Cup play. A moment that transcended time, that I will never, ever forget. I am still stunned weeks later!





“‘It’s time to show the world that we are capable,’ President Zuma tells TIME. Danny Jordaan, head of South Africa’s organizing committee, agrees. ‘If we can deliver the World Cup,’ he says, ‘we will have finally dismissed the idea created by apartheid that there are greater and lesser human beings. We will be ready to take our place in the world.’”

[Alex Perry, “Playing The Rebel Game.” TIME June 14th, 2010]



Unconquered World Cup Worship Tour Accompanying South Africans On Mission

I had the deep privilege of accompanying a group of 13 South Africans on mission within their own country this past month. Maxie invited me to come alongside her leadership of one of several teams that were sent out to all the major cities of South Africa that were hosting matches in the 2010 FIFA World Cup. I couldn’t have been more excited to join a team of talented worship musicians, dancers, and teachers in a role of pastoring the team as they ministered to others! We performed in a wide variety of locations throughout the Port Elizabeth, Jeffrey’s Bay, and Humansdorp areas in the southern part of South Africa, sharing Ayoba! chants, vuvuzela contests, incredible music and dance, and a general spreading of hope and unity as the nation watched the World Cup spectacle unfold all around them. I was fortunate to be able to participate in this madness as an

MC with Angela, a teenager from Mabopane that Maxie and the Pure Hope team work with regularly.

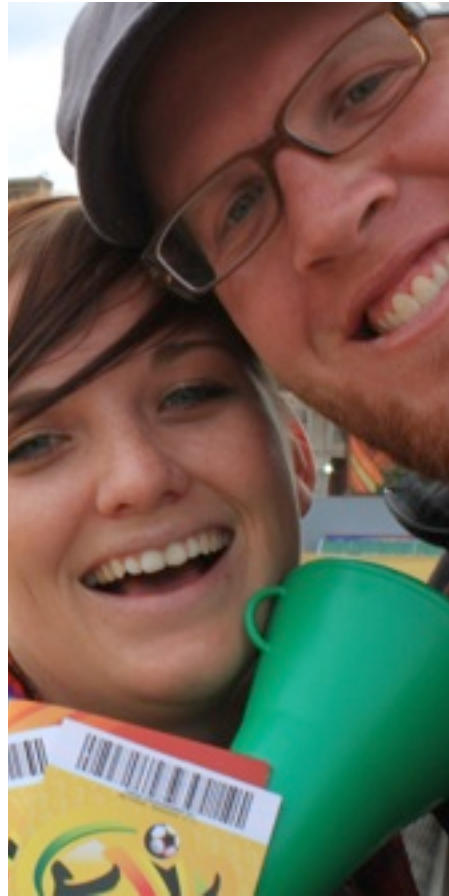
It was fascinating watching a diverse group of South Africans come to grips with the continued realities of poverty, gangs, abuse, and physical need that so many other their fellow South Africans struggle with, as we found ourselves sharing music in deeply impoverished ‘Coloured’ communities through a local church connection. To see lower income students wrestle with meeting children that were much poorer than themselves is an image I will never forget!

I am excited to see where this new opportunity leads...



140 Character Updates Answering, 'What Am I Doing?'

- I just finally moved into my new place (a back bachelors flat of a house in our new neighborhood of Clydesdale right next to the University of Pretoria in the city, and the rugby/soccer stadium (Loftus) you've seen on the World Cup). I navigated South African government bureaucracy and purchased a car.
- Maxie and I are progressing along great, it's been 11 months together earlier this week which is incredibly awesome and weird! I think we are moving towards long term relationship, committed to grow and progress together. We are appreciating each other more and more, learning to value the immense cultural differences that come when you throw an American and a South African together in relationship, and choosing each other over many other things.
- We (all of CRM that is) head to Malaysia for the last 2 weeks of July for our every 4 years annual worldwide conference (literally all of CRM stops what they are doing in over 25 countries with over 400 missionary families and gathers for a week of worship, teaching, exhortation, strategy, and play). I can't wait to understand the larger story i am a part of!
- I recently led the teaching team (they call themselves the Public Pool!) of 3rd Place, my local faith community in Pretoria, through a day long retreat of input and reflection connected to Donald Miller's incredible work, "A Million Miles In A Thousand Years." I have been chewing on this book ever since it was released last autumn and have to say that I think it is the most profound, powerful, disturbing, and beautiful work I have ever read. I've worked through it at least 3 times now, and am about to start on it for a fourth time soon. It has basically been the only thing I have been reading the past 9 months. More accurately as Rob Bell comments in a quote on the book jacket, "I feel like this work was reading me." I have been profoundly challenged to consider the types of stories I am telling with my life, and to create (as God has breathed this creative impulse deep within me) meaningful stories with my life.



Round of 16 Match
Maxie and I travelled far (3 blocks) from my house to Loftus Versfeld in Pretoria, a World Cup stadium and the home of Blue Bulls Rugby and Supersport United PSL Soccer. We had an incredible time cheering on Japan (in honor of my longtime roommate Colby Long) as they lost to Paraguay in a tense shootout after extra time.

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