

AUSSIE RULES HAS REACHED VIETNAM

A TRIBUTE MATCH OF FOOTY was played on 24th April at the greyhound racing track in Vung Tau between the Hawks and the Saints.

In Vietnam, the Govt allows just two countries to honour their fallen with a memorial. They are France (Dien Bien Phu) and Australia. (Long Tan).

In exchange, the Vietnamese Govt requests that those who visit the memorials do not wear medals, uniforms, raise or display flags, or play music and that any speeches should be short and low key.

Against this backdrop of sensitivities, on Saturday 24th April 2010, the Vietnam Swans played the inaugural ANZAC Friendship Match at the Greyhound Racing Track in Vung Tau (Vung Tau served as the Australian logistics base during the Vietnam War).

In Australia, Aussie Rules is very closely aligned with ANZAC Day – the anniversary of that terrible dawn back in 1915 when the ANZAC's landed on the beaches of Gallipoli. In Asia ANZAC footy matches were played in nine countries, in memory of Australia's and New Zealand's fallen.

The ANZAC Friendship Match- Vietnam



Saigon Saints

v



Hanoi Hawks

Held at the Vung Tau Dog Track, amid a carnival atmosphere, with BBQ, beer and beef pies. After all the formalities and a spine tingling rendition of the National Anthem performed by National President Fabbo and his backup singers from the North & South, the 400 strong crowd, including Ambassadors, Vietnamese orphans, Consul Generals, Veterans, Defense Attaches, western children University Presidents and adults, were about to be treated to a football spectacular. Just like at the MCG, a minutes silence was observed.

From the moment Hanoi Hawks jumped out of the blocks early with a few quality goals hammered home in the quarter, the Saigon boys were under pressure. The second quarter was similar, with plenty of scoring opportunities from both teams. Saints coach and his colleagues were looking for inspiration as they were looking down the barrel of a large defeat.

But the South did not give up, and started to dominate in the middle and around the ground. Worked their way back into it.

Three quarter time couldn't come quick enough for the Hawks, actually full time couldn't come quick enough! They pleaded for more, it could have been sweat, not tears falling from the Captain's face, as he urged his team on, his passion for the brownish jumper evident to all to see.

The 4th Quarter was a pressure cooker. The crowd were on their feet. The Hawks were dead on theirs –

and the Southerners were storming home. It was a goal fest. Saigon Pres. kicked home Goal of the Day – only to find play had stopped 30 seconds earlier! It didn't matter, he banged home another one, and that one didn't count either.

The Hawks were hanging on by a thread. The Saints were banging illegitimate goals from everywhere as the seconds ticked down. Against the run of play, cool hand Lucas casually snapped one over the shoulder from the boundary and as the siren sounded in an epic thriller, the Hanoi Hawks had hung on by a solitary point.

The following day everyone attended the Dawn Service at Long Tan before going back to Vung Tau to watch the Collingwood Essendon match played back in Melbourne.

THE FIRST TIME VIETNAM HOSTED THE ANZAC MATCH, AND HAWKS WERE A CLOSE BUT DEFINITE WINNER !!!!! Well done to all the organizers, it sounded wonderful.

IT NEVER ENDS



When politicians beat drums and commit to war

Soldiers bid farewell, do their duty and even more
Face the dangers; hear the screams and cries
At times, some hold the hand of a mate soon to die.

Home is swamp, mud, jungle, icy slopes or desert sands
Tossing, turning and the restless sleep of the damned
Never knowing if they will see again their beloved land.

Finally when killing is at an end and bugles blow
The causes forgotten; perhaps no one cares or knows.

In the aftermath, it's enough to make grown men cry
When soldiers, who killed, often have to explain why.

While historians make judgment but were never there
As well as politicians who simply do not care

In time, scarred soldiers adjust and try to thrive
Bitter memories put on hold but still much alive
While dark suits in Canberra town never miss a beat
With fat wallets, false promises, rhetoric and very sleek.

Much talk of freedom paid for by our glorious dead
Laying wreaths and praising all who wore military thread.

Now a fresh page of history and the ink is still wet
The cruel loins of war do stir and soon to beget
Crowds cheer as young soldiers march without fear.

Dark suits once more beat drums for the God of Mars
Then quickly depart the scene in chauffeur driven cars

Old soldiers with few coins shuffle in queues for a bus

While younger ones fly to war, soon to be some of us

George Mansford – February 2010