

Rancho Mastatal Updates

July 2007

Rancho Mastatal UPDATE for the month of JULY 2007 The group that we recently received from Lakeside School in Seattle was without doubt one of the coolest collection of young adults that we have ever spent time with here at the Ranch. They simply blew us away with their level of maturity, interest, self-reliance and poise. This edition of the Ranch's newsletter features their visit.

In other news, our building projects continue to move forward albeit at a bit of a slower pace than normal given the lack of building expertise in the current volunteer crew though that hasn't meant that we haven't been making some great strides in other areas, most notably on the sewing machine and in the gardens. And behind the school, under the careful tutelage of GREG, Tiburon's house is beginning to take shape. The composting toilet's almost done with pictures of the Hankey-esque house soon to come.

The community of Mastatal has grown in ways more observable this year than any other year since we arrived to Mastatal. Upstart businesses such as Juan Luis' and Marcos' has resulted in a greater influx of tourists, changing the character of our little town in many ways. The more diverse social scene has some local teenagers spending their fair share of evenings at the *pulpería* or in the streets late into the night with little to do besides drink, smoke and try to hook up with short-term gringo residents. Amongst other issues, this has prompted us to think more seriously about how we might be able to bring more leisure alternatives to our young adult population. Unfortunately the community center was recently closed off to the indoor soccer fanatics that had been frequently the establishment as of late. This was a wonderful option that entertained people of all ages for a number of months before the local government's unfortunate decision to ban the sport due to damage to the facilities. We're fighting to get this decision overturned and are trying to form a fund that will pay for any collateral damage caused to the community center due to misdirected "*bolas de cuero*". Even if we do succeed in getting our *fútbol* rights reinstated, we'll still have to come up with some more ideas to keep the local youth occupied. Creating a culture of reading is top on our list, hence our efforts to build a local library. Never a lack of work around here, but thankfully there's also never a shortage of fun either.

We'll be back in the States in early October and will be looking forward to see many of you then. Please let us know where you'll be this fall. We'll mostly be in the Northeast but have 10-14 days planned for the Great Northwest too. Until then, be well. Lots of love to all of you.

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RM Program News: Lakeside Rap

This rap was written and then performed on Pizza Night by ROB BURGESS, one of Lakeside's absolutely amazing trip leaders.

Crack of dawn rollin' out of the sack
Eat a little breakfast and stumble on back

Wanna have fun there's so much to do first
Come inside but take off your shoes first
Eatin' beans and rice don't forget to chew first
Tiburon's gotta little lesson for you first
But, you can't leave `till you wash the poo first!

Head up the road to Jeanne's House
Jump in the shower give your body a douse
Now you're all clean and you're feeling OK
Comin' thru the woods you hear karaoke

Feelin' the beat you make a new dance
Slappin' your feet – Uh-oh FIRE ANTS!

Finally heading out for our daily lesson
What's it gonna be? Always keep you guessin'
Junior's got the eyes of an eagle
Marcus is smoking I don't think that's legal

We be pickin' up trash, mowin' the field
Planting, pulling and machetes we wield
When we're sweaty and stinky little men and women
Head for the river! We be GSL swimmin'!

Tummy starts to rumble hear the conch's call
Beat your little feat to Rancho Mastatal

Fill your plate and run to the table
Don't sit with the grown-ups if you're able

Antonio's runnin' – Seconds are up
Kitty's in the sink just lappin it up

Piña fruit and eggs and toast
Robin makes it tasty it's better than most
Use a toilet? Heck no – COMPOST!

Grab your wallet for the *pulpería*
Keep it low so no one will see ya

Suckin' down treats – they're nice and sweet-y
Everytime I look there's mud on my feet-y
Play cards with my friends even tho' they cheat-y
Let's hear it everybody now, "Piti la piti!"

Afternoon meeting – How you all feelin'?
Homesick and dirty but, we're all dealin'!

Checkin' the clock it's time to head back
Here comes Tim with our afternoon snack!

Try to sleep with the sounds of the forest
Chirpin' frogs – roosters join the chorus

Get all packed for the USA but we won't split before we say,
"Gracias por *TODO*, Mastatal!"
We've learned a lot and we'll miss you all!

Conservation Update: Mixed Messages

Since arriving to Mastatal, we have succeeded in protecting approximately 550 acres of mostly secondary and primary rainforest. The process to do this was costly, time-consuming, drawn out and of course beneficial to our local environment. So, about two years ago when we sought permission from the Ministry of the Environment to fell a dying tree that threatened to fall on to the *choza*, we didn't expect too much resistance from the local park guards who would determine whether or not we could move forward with our desired action.

After pestering the MINAE officials a number of times over a multiple week period, we were able to get them to look at the tree, a beautiful, enormous *pilón* that provided the area with a great deal of shade and protection. They agreed that it posed a threat not only to the house, but also to any tourists using the nearly trail system, something that we frankly hadn't considered. They departed with a promise to let me know in a few days about their decision. Many days later while walking in the street I happened upon one of the MINAE employees who had days earlier come to look at the tree. After telling him how much we regretted having to ask permission to down this king of the forest, I asked him what they had decided. But before he was able to answer I added how anxious we were a few nights before during a serious windstorm, one of the few each year that marks the changing of the seasons here in Mastatal. Before he spoke I also told him of the sleepless night I had spent months prior when I could not get it out of my head that this heavy-limbed emperor would soon come crashing down on a clueless camper. When I finally gave him a chance to

respond, he did so positively, assuring me that he had received the green light from his higher ups. I walked away satisfied, and in the coming days made preparations to move forward with the sorrowful and difficult work. I contacted our sawyer friend WILLIAM to see when he could come. Fortunately he had a gap in his schedule and was able to arrive a few days later. He would bring a tree-climbing friend of his who would scale the mammoth tree with no ropes or other climbing equipment so that he could lop off all of the tree's limbs so as to minimize the impact of the tree's fall. This added an extra day of work though we were happy to know that other trees in the forest would be salvaged due to the effort.

As William was milling the hardwood and making 2-inch planks that would serve as floor joists and furniture legs on future projects, three MINAE officials visited the site to inspect the handiwork. They nodded approvingly, chatted amongst themselves and walked away. After the tree was milled, we muled the wood to the barn so that it could safely cure during the coming months. Many weeks later, after already having come to terms with the increased sunlight and life without the tree that up until the point of the felling characterized our house site, we received a curious document from MINAE telling us that we had violated the forestry laws set forth by the Costa Rican government by illegally downing and taking advantage of a tree in our forest. I was caught off guard and could barely believe our misfortune. How could it be that the same people that had given me oral permission to down the tree now be responsible for the document that sat in hands? What had we done wrong? The truth is that I had indeed done something wrong, though it hadn't occurred to me until this moment. It was that I had only received verbal approval from MINAE. I had nothing in writing. But spoken agreements were how these things have always been done in Mastatal. This helped to avoid multiple trips into town and endless paperwork that one has to otherwise go through. I met with the public defender in Puriscal a month or two after receiving the notice and explained to her my version of the story. She suggested that I plead innocent, which I did. Almost a year passed before hearing anything else. I was certain that the issue had blown over and was ready to use the now dry lumber for awaiting projects. At about this time another notice arrived. A hearing with MINAE and a judge in Puriscal. I'd heard how this process might take some time but hadn't expected it to take this long. Nevertheless, I made the trip into town for the scheduled hearing and arrived 15 minutes early to find a MINAE official that I knew also waiting. I got to talking to him and soon realized that he was the person representing MINAE for our hearing. He asked me what had happened at which time I thought, "how the hell could he be representing his institution if he didn't even know anything that had happened"? He suggested that I donate about \$600 to the MINAE office in Puriscal and that this show of good faith would put this little "misunderstanding" to bed. I told him that I felt cheated, prompting a frown followed by a show of disgust. Oh well. Perhaps Cururú pissed in my homemade granola that morning.

While waiting, our sawyer friend William, a chiseled mass of man earned from years of heaving heavy chainsaws and hunks of wood, also showed up. He had also been called to appear. And if Cu pissed in my granola then his bulldog must of shit in his *gallo pinto* because he entered with a serious chip on his shoulder. I pleaded with him to settle down, that our time would come, and that lobbing swear words at everybody that walked by wouldn't solve anything. I thought that maybe my little suggestion had worked until in walked our public defender who then took a blast of anger from William to the side of the head. We talked with the woman that would defend us for about 20 minutes before entering a room where a judge, the MINAE representative, and two other folks

who's role I'm still entirely unsure of were awaiting us. We talked, told our stories, and decided that it would be best to come to a compromise that would prevent us from having to appear in court in San José, even though William was adamant about relenting one inch. He continued to cry injustice, and I agreed with him, but I couldn't fathom the idea of a drive to and day spent in San José in the near future to battle this one out in court.

The group of assembled professionals suggested that in exchange for our sin we plant a number of trees, to more than make up for the one that we cut down. I said that this would be fine, that we plant hundreds of trees every year anyways without having to be told by anyone to do so. In hindsight I should've said that yes, we would do, though it would be a major pain in the ass. Sometimes I'm just too honest. Nevertheless, at the time, I thought that this was it. I was satisfied with the compromise and started to prepare my papers to leave when one of the unidentified officials asked where the wood that we milled currently was. I told them honestly that it was in our barn. Everyone held his or her breath for a moment. Then somebody spoke about that not being legal, that we would have to give up the milled wood for some random reason or another. The discussion resumed and all talk turned to do with the wood. The MINAE official made the case that the wood should be donated to his under-funded institution. I immediately piped in that I'd rather burn the wood than give it MINAE after the injustice that I felt was being done. The judge fortunately agreed and so, much to the chagrin of Señor Brooks, the MINAE rep, we made a compromise that the elementary school in Mastatal would be the opportune recipients. So, even though the issue still lingers, we're close to its end. We donated 50 beautiful trees from our nursery to the school in San Miguel though the milled *pilon* still sits next to our barn, waiting for the bickering MINAE officials to decide how to proceed.

So, if you don't believe in the efficiencies of Latin American bureaucracy, take my word for it, they create jobs. And lots of headaches.

Building Report: You'll Never Believe It

Yes, it's true, as you read this, Mastatal's kitchen, spoon by spoon, plate by plate, chopstick by chopstick, is getting moved in to its new space. This long awaited event's time has finally arrived. The furniture's in place and the stars have aligned. With two weeks between groups, the time's never been riper to undertake this gargantuan task. Here's a quick written rundown of what it's like and how it will function. And for those of you out there wondering, the cookbook should be ready for sale in a few months.

Let's start with Spice Mountain, a beautiful timber-framed shelf made by CHRIS REMMERS, it sits atop the stone half wall and will showcase all of our spices.

Next we have the baking table, thanks to TYCONDO's expertise in the woodshop, which will allow the bakers their own space with all the accoutrements including a stand up mixer and brand spanking new Cuisinart Food Processor. The flour and all baking equipment will be found within an arms reach!

The centerpiece, truly grand and solid, made by Tyler as well, is a behemoth of amazing grace. We will all have our own space to chop and slice and no bumpin' butts!! It features a full size shelf

underneath where all prep bowls and pots will be stored.

The sink is to take your breath away. This was an amazing collaboration between HEATHER and NORMAN the potter. It took a lot longer than had been expected, but the result is stunning. It is truly a work of art. It is a representation of the constellations seen when you walk out the front gate in April at 8p.m. You have to see it to believe it! Thanks to JEN SNYDER for believing in the new kitchen and giving us the funds to make the handmade ceramic tiles a possibility. Also in the works are the serving table, the cookbook bookshelf, and the beer/game parlor.

A big heartfelt thanks to all mentioned here and those who I forgot to thank I really appreciate all of your hard work to make this new space a reality for us! So five and a half years later the temporary kitchen has been put to rest and we are movin' and groovin' in our new digs. Can't wait to share this space with you all and boy the new kitchen tour is going to take a lot longer! Thanks again to you all for making this happen!! Can't wait to have you all back down to check it out. Now we have opened the door for a bunch more projects; the old kitchen will be more library space and now have space for a couch!!! See ya soon!

Volunteer/Guest Gossip: Journal Excerpts

Lakeside Global Service Learning 2007 Journal Excerpts from Tess Rinearson

June 29: Today we woke up in our homestays. Sam, my homestay partner, and I had some really sweet pancakes—Jessica, my host mom, would put extra sugar in everything. Sam and I walked up the red hill, past the local church, and to the bunkhouse, and prepared to go on a hike to a river where we could swim. Everyone was pretty psyched at the idea of escaping from the perpetual heat of Costa Rica.

We were due to start our group meeting at eight, but Mie and Jade, two of my classmates, were nowhere to be seen. One of our leaders, Mr. Lapsley, said that they were probably milking cows, since their host family owned a few. The girls had been keen to try to milk a cow. So, thinking they would be along shortly, we started the meeting without them. At about nine, they came hurrying up the hill.

"How was the milking?" everyone asked, interested to know what had made them an hour late.

Jade and Mie looked at each other, with kind of funny expressions. "It was... hard physical labor," Jade said. She laughed a little sheepishly.

Turns out, they had just slept in. Twelve and a half hours. No cow milking.

So, finally, we got started on our hike. Tiburón ("shark" in Spanish), another leader who was so named for his run-in with a *tiburón*, said that he'd pushed lunch back to one (instead of twelve) and that he would try to keep our activities brief. (He still stopped us and talked a lot, as is typical Tiburón.) We stopped at one point to pick up some wild nutmeg, which grows covered in a bright, rubbery encasing. (The violent color attracts birds.) Nearby, we saw a tarantula nest in a hollow log, with a single tarantula guarding the opening. I didn't see the whole spider—only a few furry

legs—but I was still a little freaked out. I can handle small insects fine, but I'm not so friendly with large spiders.

When we got to the river where we were going to swim, everyone stripped down to their suits and cannonballed into the water. The current grabbed everyone, and so, to avoid being swept downstream, several people clutched rocks, which were covered in a fuzzy brown gunk. It appeared to be a mix of sediment and biological matter. Some people fought the current, but eventually, everyone ended up downstream, skipping rocks.

After a time, we got out of the water, dried off, and hiked back to lunch, which was delicious, as always. It was my turn to help with the lunch dishes, and I actually found it somewhat enjoyable. There is a certain appeal to drying dishes and chatting amiably with the volunteers in the kitchen.

June 30: The local soccer field was a mess yesterday. There was prickly weed, there was overgrown grass, and there was mud all over the place. The field is now beautiful.

It took us three hours and a lot of sweat. (One of my classmates was forced to dump his sweat-filled boots out.) It was very hard physical labor (unlike the "cow-milking"). We used rakes and our hands to remove the debris that locals and interns had macheted. (Rob Burgess ran a weed whacker, or, as he claims it is actually called, a "string trimmer".) Other students simply pulled the prickly weeds out and hurled them into the woods beyond the field. Three boys actually constructed a drainage system.

But someone made a sad but realistic observation: "Who is going to take care of this field?" The locals used to have a sporting committee, and the field was pristine. The committee ran a successful fund-raiser, and hired some heavy machinery to level their field. They paid the leveler, then headed off to lunch. While the locals were away, the leveler made a few passes across the field and left for San Miguel. He had ruined the grass and the drainage system, and the field was very uneven. And now the sports committee had no money.

Time took over the field. Pioneer species came in, and the locals played soccer in the community center, on concrete.

After that disheartening story, I was worried the field, or *La Plaza*, as the locals call it, would become abandoned again, but Annie presented a ray of hope. She told our group about the three young boys who had been working on the field. They had breathlessly recited the logic that had clearly been told to them by an adult: If people don't keep the field nice, we can't play soccer.

That evening, once Sam and I were at our homestay, we decided to make good use of the recently cleaned plaza. Yendry and Alex, our host siblings, were pretty excited, too. We headed over with a Frisbee and two lacrosse sticks that Antonio and I had brought. On the way there, two little boys joined us. It occurred to me that I could invite Andie and Bitania to join us, since they were staying at Lily's, which was nearby. Hey, I figured. The more, the merrier.

I wasn't exactly sure where Lily's house was, but I knew where it was generally, so I had to start down in the general direction and hope that I would miraculously make it. It did occur to me that it

wasn't very smart to be walking in a foreign country (where I didn't speak the language) to an undetermined destination, but I wasn't too worried. I was working my way down the path to the house (or, at least I thought it was the house) when I was passed by three teenagers. One of the girls gave me a funny stare, then said, "Hello." In English. I realized that she must be Anya, Lily's English-speaking daughter.

"Are you Anya?" I wasn't entirely sure.

"Yes," she said, and fixed me with an even stranger stare. I'm sure she was wondering how a lost and slightly grimy-looking gringo knew who she was.

"Where are Andie and Bitania?" I asked, still cautious, and not liking Anya's staring.

"Down there." Thankfully, she broke her stare—though, by now it was more of a glare. She pointed me in the right direction.

"Thank you! *Gracias!*" Even with all the staring, I was very grateful to Anya.

I continued in the direction that Anya had pointed, down to a house occupied by an older gentleman, relaxing in a chair on the inside and resting his feet on the open windowsill. He clearly didn't speak English, so I attempted some (very) bad and (very) broken Spanish.

"Uh... Bitania y Andie?"

"Sí." He stood and walked into his house.

Bitania and Andie emerged shortly, greeting me.

I said to them, "There is a bunch of people playing Frisbee and lacrosse over at the field." A bunch of people was a bit of an overstatement.

"Who's playing?"

Oi. They really sensed a slight exaggeration, but, more likely, I was just reading too much into it.

"Oh, just Sam and a few kids."

"We'll join you. Let's ask." They figured out how to ask in Spanish before they actually spoke to their host parents, working the conjugations aloud. They turned into the house. I heard them ask, and then, "*Gracias!*" And two girls came bounding out of the house.

We took a shortcut to *La Plaza*, cutting through people's backyards until we emerged, field side. Sam had engaged the younger children in an enthusiastic Frisbee round—or maybe they had engaged her.

About a minute after we came back, our host brother, Alex, began to suddenly cry. Yendry, ever the responsible sister, put her arm around him and walked him home. The Americans hung around

for about a minute after they left, but then the last little Costa Rican was called home, so we headed back to our homestays.

Dinner was chicken soup. Last night, our host family had informed us that they had purchased a chicken for chicken soup. Unfortunately, this chicken had run away, and had hidden in the trees. Everyone ended up engaged in a flashlight-lit chicken hunt.

July 1: Today we hiked to San Vicente, which was quite a walk. It was hot and sunny, and everyone sweated like pigs. (Though, as Mie pointed out, pigs don't actually sweat.) We headed up a few very long and very uneven hills, making slow progress up slopes that had been dramatically eroded by water. There was a lot of mud (my formerly white shoes are now red—the Costa Rican mud is remarkably rust-colored and clay-ey. There were also two river crossings, and I watched my classmates slip and slide along the rocks before splashing through myself.

When we got to San Vicente, we watched an intense soccer match between the Mastatal Galácticos and Zapatón, a team from an indigenous reserve. There were a lot of yellowcards on both sides, and by the end, the Galácticos came out on top. Timo, the owner of Rancho Mastatal, scored one of the goals for Mastatal.

During the game, we bought lunch at a fieldside stand. *Arroz con pollo* and *gallo de pollo* were popular, but everyone (or almost everyone) had *apretados*, sweet and fruity ice in bags.

When we got back to Mastatal, we had a group meeting where we talked about the greatest challenges we've faced so far. Most people said that the climate was the greatest challenge—the heat makes you sweat, the sweat makes you want to wash your clothes, the humidity doesn't let the clothes dry, the clothes mold. The climate here also presents a personal challenge for me, as an asthmatic who doesn't breathe as easily in humidity.

After the group meeting, we went to a crazy Costa Rica versus United States soccer game. I didn't play—soccer and Tess are comparable to oil and water—but I hung out on the field and took some pictures—until I got socked in the gut by a ball, that is. I meekly retreated to higher ground, where I watched Costa Rica outplay the United States. But, then, someone shouted out, "Next goal wins!" and then the Mastatalians scored on themselves, so I guess we won. By the end of the game, it was pouring rain, and Mr. Lapsley had been taken down by the "ghosts of the field" about a million times. (As in, he slipped.)

July 2: We got to join in the reforestation efforts today. Some kids went with Tiburón and planted seedlings that had been growing in the nursery, some people (as in, Brendan and all the teachers) went with Junior, a local, to collect seedlings to keep growing safely in the nursery, and a group of girls mixed the compost and bagged it. I was in the group of girls, where we got a system of transportation and bagging going. We were pretty efficient. No one was queasy about touching compost that had come out of the composting toilet. One girl humorously announced, "I touched POOP today!" (Though, in reality, it had decomposed and really wasn't anything like excrement.)

However, everyone freaked out a little when we found a huge larva-esque creature wriggling through the compost. A few people tried to flick it out of the compost pile, but no one was

successful until Mie bravely took her shovel and threw the... thing down the hill.

July 3: Today was another day of service. A group of girls finished the classroom wall, covering the wattle and daub construction with a mix of clay and manure. Three boys helped out with the construction of two rock paths. One boy went to learn about design and architecture. Two students practiced their Spanish and helped cook lunch with two local women who cook out midday meal every day. One student wrote about her experience at Mastatal for the Rancho's newsletter.

Community Facts/Stories: *El Grupo de Lakeside*

We are inspired by certain events that take place at certain places and times in our lives. These occasions sometimes become a mirror of opportunities. One of these events recently took place at Rancho Mastatal with a group of young students from the Lakeside School in Seattle, Washington. Highly spirited and adventurous best described these young adults. Maturity beyond their years, I had the opportunity to meet and interact with some of them on a one-on-one basis. It was more than I could possibly have imagined. I managed to observe each student share an experience that



The peaks of La Cangrega

was uniquely different than those of the other students. It helped me to see myself in a new way. Beyond revealing ourselves in a new way, they helped us to better know who others are. Each student will go home with wonderful stories, but a far more important matter is that we can be assured that our planet earth will be a far better place to live with them on it. Because of them, we see life, as we should. It was a delight and pleasure to share that window of time and space with each student. Special thanks are due to Bob, Rob and Annie. Your guidance, preparations and work ethics as teachers are to be highly commended.

Gracias por sus inspiraciones.

GUNTHER

Comida Corner: Sultry Shortbread with Dark Chocolate Drizzle

This recipe yields shortbread so delectable that it earned an honorary mention at the nightly circle before dinner on its debut. Already, a second batch has been made within the first week of its tenure and it promises to become a staple in the snack time circuit. The chocolate drizzle on top provides a wonderful opportunity for the pastry chef to exhibit their artistic abilities. Even the hungriest snackers cannot help but stare, transfixed as their interpretation of the chocolate drizzle pattern unravels archetypal secrets about their unconscious like an inkblot test. People have seen everything from diabolic clowns to Japanese characters to indigenous petroglyphs. Beware these tasty treats are addictive and Pico has yet to receive a single morsel of leftovers! Special thanks to The Cheese Board Collective Works cookbook for inspiration, though the recipe has been modified!

Makes 2 dozen cookies.

Ingredients for the Sultry Shortbread:

2 sticks plus an additional 2 tablespoons of unsalted butter at room temperature

3½ cups all-purpose white flour

1½ cups whole-wheat flour

½ cup granulated sugar

½ cup *tapa dulce* (can be replaced with the same amount of sugar)

2 tablespoons milk

½ teaspoon salt

Ingredients for the Dark Chocolate Drizzle:

¼ cup cacao powder

¼ cup milk

¼ cup *tapa dulce* (can be replaced with the same amount of sugar)

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Grease two baking sheets.

To make the shortbread, combine the butter, milk, sugar, *tapa dulce* and salt in one large bowl. Cream the mixture together until smooth. Stir in the all-purpose white flour and whole-wheat flour. Spread a small handful of flour on a clean tabletop and knead dough until smooth. Use a floured rolling pin to flatten the dough into a sheet of ½ inch thickness. Use a knife to cut the dough into 2x2 inch squares, or use a cookie cutter. If using the knife technique, neaten the edges of each square with your fingertips. Place shortbread 1 inch apart on the baking sheet and place in oven. Bake for 15-20 minutes.

While the shortbread is baking, begin to make the dark chocolate drizzle. Combine milk and *tapa dulce* or sugar in a small saucepan over a low heat. Add cacao powder after one minute and stir frequently until mixture becomes a smooth, silky texture.

Once shortbread has cooled, drizzle dark chocolate atop the cookies using a teaspoon or other similar utensil. Let the chocolate solidify before serving.

Buen Provecho!

- Jenna & Ari

F?tbol Follies: *Los Verdes*

With not much news to report from the local front with the local team struggling to find games as

the rains get heavier and more intense, the news this week will focus mostly on ball from Guarumal. Moreover, the indoor soccer recently came to a screeching halt when the local government decided that we couldn't play in the community center any longer because of too many broken light bulbs, mud on the walls, and damage to the bathroom doors. The decision came as a blow to all of us who had become accustomed to the everyday early evening games. Unfortunately one of the only healthy recreational opportunities in town has been snatched out from beneath our feet from one day to the next. It's a real pity as now the young boys and girls have taken to hanging out in the streets once again with the outdoor pitch still in shambles. So much for the community center being a center for the community. Kind of unbelievable in my humble opinion. The space now sits idle most days except for the mornings when the historically destructive middle school kids use the area as a room for "higher learning". No sarcasm intended.

Anyways, back to the football. As was mentioned last month, TIMO, JUNIOR, and ALEX have been playing in a tourney with a team from Guarumal. After two bye weeks in a row, Los Verdes traveled to Gamolotillo 2, about an hour and 10 minutes from Mastatal towards Jacó, to meet Los Hermanos de La Gloria. Timo and Junior made the trip sans Alex who, after an apparently epic night at the *pulpería*, missed the Saturday morning bus to San José to bring his adorable little boy KENDAL back to his mother, and instead had to go on Sunday. We arrived to also find out that our starting goalie, one of our starting defenseman, and another of our starting midfielders didn't make it to the game for various reasons. So this would be a good test for us and an opportunity for some of the younger blood to gain themselves a cap. Los Verdes started off sluggish and before the first ten minutes had gone by, found themselves down 1-0 to the average La Gloria squad. Los Hermanos scored another goal about halfway into the first period taking out what little air was left in Guarumal's sails. A fortunate free kick blast by our central defender in the "reto final" of the first closed the gap to one going into halftime.

After a few strategic substitutions, Los Verdes came out in the second with some newfound energy and spunk and tied the game on a blistering shot by Junior about five minutes in. We soon after took our first lead of the game with a beautiful free kick from MAURICIO, our central defender, his second goal of the day, and ten minutes later, Junior added his second of the game, another cracker, to put Los Verdes up by two. We were feeling pretty good at this point and playing energized ball when our goalie, a player not accustomed to being between the posts, let in an easy lob over his head. He was caught too far out of the goal and we again needed to turn it up a notch to keep those three points in our sights. We were fortunately able to add a security goal, a great shot by one of our talented forwards, CRISTIAN, and the rest was history. It was a gutsy second half this time around that got the job done and we added those three points to our total and remain solidly in second, one point behind the leaders, Chires, with five games to go in the second round. The top four teams pass through to the knockout round and as it stands, Los Verdes control their own destiny.

Inspirational Impressions: Bullet Control

"Everybody is talking about gun control. Got to control the guns. Fuck that...I think we need some bullet control. I think every bullet should cost five thousand dollars. Five thousand dollars for a bullet. Know why? `Cause if a bullet cost five thousand dollars...people would think before they shot someone. "Man, I would blow your fucking head, if I could afford it. I'm gonna get me a

second job, start saving up, and you a dead man."

---Chris Rock

Abrazos,

The Ranch Crew