

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE ASSEMBLY 3RD AUGUST 2018

During the holidays I was in London at the same time as the Soccer World Cup which was being held in Russia. You can imagine what excitement there was in the UK as England advanced to the semi finals only to be beaten by Croatia in a pulsating match, that in itself a David and Goliath story, the population of Croatia is a mere 4,1 million as opposed to 65,6 million in the UK.

You will all have your special memories of the world cup; not least the fact that Russia, despite a lot of scepticism in advance, delivered a flawless world cup. Certainly, no-one could quibble with the eventual winners France who were the most consistent and skillful team at the tournament. While we remember the brilliance of some of the players and teams in the world cup we will also remember it for the bizarre behaviour of Maradona in the stands after Argentina's loss to Nigeria; and the antics of Neymar rolling around on the ground spawning countless memes and adverts for fried chicken!

One of my personal favourite teams was Japan who played so superbly in their heart-breaking loss against Belgium in the last 16. The image of their fans staying behind to clear the stadium after every match was an amazing example. The Japanese team apparently left their changing rooms spotless with a single word note to their Russian hosts, "*Spacibo*". Thank you.

Away from the sports channels there was a quite different story developing about a much younger soccer team, a story which captured the attention of the world. In Thailand, a football squad of 12 young boys, aged 12-16, and their coach, had got themselves trapped by rising flood water four kilometres inside an extensive cave system. It took two weeks to find them and the rescue operation was followed with bated breath around the world. It was a dangerous and extremely technical rescue which claimed the life of one navy seal diver. It was also a race against time with heavy rains about to fall. On the same day as the first world cup semi-final, the last boy and coach were brought to safety.

This was a real life and death story which unfolded in the opposite hemisphere to the drama unfolding at the World Cup. The question to ask is, which was the more significant event, France holding up the Jules Rimet 18 carat gold trophy, or the cave rescue in Thailand?

***"The cave rescue showcased the best of humanity. Resourcefulness, resilience, team work, collaboration, care, love, diligence, thoroughness, optimism and hope. It lifted the spirits and hopes of all the world."* Ben Fogle.**

This parallel and contrasting story serves to highlight and remind us that there are far more important things than football and sport no matter how big the scale.

One cannot deny that the achievement by France in lifting that Jules Rimet trophy was an excellent feat, in terms of significance, rescuing those young boys from those caves beats it every time.

So, enjoy your weekend sports encounters against SACS, do the very best you can for yourself and the team, but remember, keep things in perspective.

(With thanks for this theme to Tim Jarvis; school counsellor at Michaelhouse).