



# ITALY 2022



## Practice Day

The day started more positively. Our bed has been very comfortable and the air conditioning in our bedroom at least functions despite not being able to be regulated. Even the breakfast room was more inviting - not a used dish in sight. The coffee aficionados in our group reckon the coffee machine works well. Despite the still sad array of food there were many happy faces sharing stories about their trips. We should have our full compliment of players tomorrow. The day was set aside for planning meetings and some more practice. In the morning, after our early morning meeting, a small group followed Roger to visit a neighbouring

All players are super keen and competitive at the beginning of the game. After 30mins of full-on football the mind remains strong but the body weakens!!

village. Wayne decided that the attractions of Florence sounded far more interesting. Everyone else just lazed around.

## Italy Women v Aust Men

The teams were organised to play against the Italian women's team. They duly turned up to the practice pitch, which is actually the size of a basketball court, looking like a fairly strong unit. They were obviously quite a bit younger than our guys and from our initial observation as they kicked the ball around they did have some silky skills and quite powerful shots. We settled down to watch the first half which was against the Over 50s men. 6-a-side played on a smaller pitch made things quite crowded so passing was a bit rushed at times. Numerous goals were scored.

It appeared pretty obvious that neither side intended to lose. After some hard and fast end to end play, one Aussie recalcitrant was sent to the sin bin for undue rough play but the hard play continued. It was not long before all players were summoned into a huddle to be warned that this was "just a practice match!!" The recalcitrant argued the point — a bit embarrassing! The constant running and hard tackling in a game where walking and no contact are a feature meant that someone could get hurt. The game continued and the rules were applied more strictly.

The second session was much more sedate with the Over 60s team taking its turn to match the impressive women. Noelene, our only woman player, matched it with the Italians. This session was much needed practice for the team — this group of players has never played together before.

After the women departed, the two Australian teams stayed on and played against each other. Some players were visibly over stretched. Team members need to get to know each other and their style of play yes, but they also need to stay whole for the games to come. Poor Anthony ("The Wall"), goalkeeper, ended up in the net exhausted and winded by a powerful shot. We all hope he had a good rest last night.

Heather is getting to know the other members of Australia's "rent-a-crowd" (spouses/partners). Life is hard when you have to carry around spare kit and water bottles in the heat without shade. A better day was had by everyone, we are getting to know our way around the local area (especially a supermarket to supplement the limited food choice available in our "Marigold Hotel") and the camaraderie between players is growing. Our trip to play in the World Cup is certainly proving to be very memorable.

### *Twinkle toes and skill on show*



Scheduling a practice match is all very well but there was no giving any quarter once the game got going despite being asked to slow down and work on strategies and realise how your fellow players think and play. It proves that once on the ground the competitive nature of playing football for all those years kicks in - we must remember that this is a social competition to be enjoyed by all.