

Hi RC Delft,

I've now been in Chengdu, China for 5 months now and settling in well. I've found a rugby club here, although I think the word "club" is being very generous. A better description is a bunch of guys (and girls) who play touch-rugby on a Thursday and the occasional contact on Saturday. Most of the players are Americans so teaching them to throw the ball backwards and place the ball down over the try-line (rather than throw it on the ground) is a real challenge. Surprisingly there is a rugby pitch in Chengdu but it is in really bad condition and as hard as concrete so really shit to play on. However, this is much better than the astro-turf we train on every Thursday!!

One of the teams we play against is the Chinese National Ladies Team (no joke). They're based in Chengdu and these girls are GOOD, scarily good. They have been hand selected from the countryside, the majority of them are illiterate, and they have been selected for their size, speed and skill (and female hormone deficiency). It's an amazing opportunity for them – If they make the final cut they will be playing 7s for China in the 2016 Olympics. If they don't they are sent back to a life of poverty in the country. They train 7 days per week and do nothing else except rugby. Their coach is an arse-hole who punishes them for any mistakes...it's a brutal regime, similar to how I'd imagine the Soviet gymnastics during the 70s and 80s. Anyway, if the Delft ladies fancy a game....

There aren't enough teams in China for their to be a league so we normally travel to obscure parts of China for mini-tournaments, where we play the likes of Shanghai, Beijing and many teams from Hong Kong.

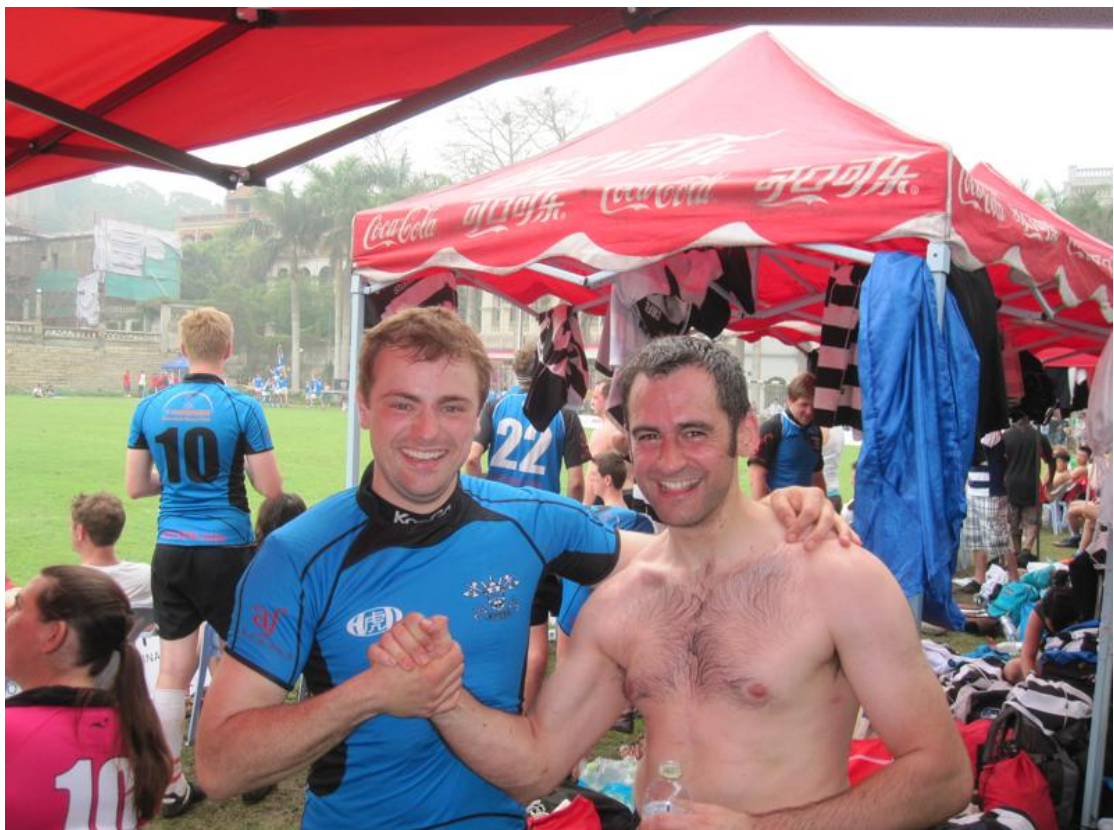
I'm definitely looking forward to coming back to Delft in a few years time and continuing with you guys. Good luck for the 2011-2012 season!

Enjoy watching the World Cup....England Expects!

Mark "Nigel" Nightingale



The "concrete" pitch in Chengdu



Me and Roy at Xiamen 10s tournament



One of the many Chinese ladies teams doing their version of the Haka