

## **Soccer Stories, by Tarit**

I remember one of the first times I was in New York, I think for April Celebrations around 1979. The Meditation-Flames were a big thing for the local boys and Guru was encouraging them like crazy. It seemed, as I found out later, they sometimes struggled to get 11 decent guys out to play. Anyway, I recall this young, fit-looking newcomer was asked if he played soccer, and next thing I knew, even before I finished the reply properly, I was in the team for a game on Sunday.

It was great fun. I am sure we lost, but the experience, for a new young aspirant on his first trip to New York, of being made to feel very much a part of something was invaluable, as most people may remember their first New York trip can be a bit daunting. Guys like Rupantar, Bhima and his brother, maybe Bipin, too, all made me feel welcome. I was so grateful Guru had a soccer team.

On another occasion, we had travelled to Zurich as Guru was visiting. The very first Impossibility-Challenger games were being held to coincide with Guru's visit. Amongst all the inspiring things going on was a competition to see who could kick a football the

furthest distance! I had signed up for it, as had a lot of the boys who had even kicked a ball in anger! I remember Guru being really taken with it and coming out onto the sports field to watch.

I was pretty way down the order and we only had two attempts at once. That had given me time to watch how everyone else was approaching it. Most were going for a stylish look, as if they were taking a classy corner kick, but they didn't travel too far. The best attempts were guys just pitching in and “hoofing it,” as we say in Britain, toe first. Having also played a lot of rugby at school, I decided this was the best approach, and I would try and go for the height and length option as if I were taking a rugby conversion.

Well, it seemed to work, as I connected full on and the ball went sailing away into the distance. When I looked over to Guru after my kick, he was clapping like crazy, saying, “Good kick! Good kick!” One of those many occasions when little childlike games we played gave Guru joy. A comment he repeated when I was called up later to receive a small memento for making the longest kick of the day. I recall trying so hard to stay grounded, grateful and humble, while at the same

time, part of my obviously unilluminated self was also feeling like I was 10 feet tall!

Thank you, Guru.