

Adventure In Japan

By Colin Green (Mick's Dad)



FRIDAY 26/10/01: We departed at 9 a.m. from Brisbane Airport with Tony, Angela, Leila, Callum, Belinda & Brian seeing us off. Jenny boarded the plane rather nervously as she spotted a dark skinned bearded man standing at the entrance (Michael and I explained to Jenny later that he was only a Security Officer and not a terrorist!). So we buckled our seatbelts as the pilot “dropped the clutch” and powered away. We kept an eye on the coastline as the plane climbed above the clouds. Col sunk a few cans, Jenny got on the plonk while Mick stayed with the H2O. A meal was served at 10:30 a.m. Jenny ate her dessert, Mick's and looked lovingly at mine. I sunk another couple of cans of Kirinichiban beer, Mick says it means Number one in Japanese, we found it easier to pronounce it as “Itchybum!” Either the seats are too small or my bum is too big (the latter being more likely). We are well looked after by the Japanese air hostesses, lots of snacks and an assortment of drinks are offered regularly. Movie time - earphones on- a Sylvester Stallone race movie, and next a Jennifer Lopez love story.

Must be $\frac{3}{4}$ there by now. Mick had a rest or two against the window. Bums are getting sore, legs cramped, looking forward to touch-down. Warm towels handed out to wash our grabbers again, must be 4 p.m., it appears to be mealtime again. No need to loosen belts though, it's a salad burger which resembles a sea cucumber in appearance as well as taste (Jenny tells me it's a croissant). We dutifully fill in documents for foreigners visitation; plane slowing down must be approaching Japan. “Ari Garto” for small mercies. Touch down at 5 p.m., the brakes had a definite ‘my disc pads need replacing sound’. The Narita Airport is about 80 kilometers from Tokyo but the size of the airport and the size of Tokyo seem to make the two intermingle.

Oitate, from the Pancrase organization gave us a warm welcome and also handed Mick and I envelopes with nearly \$500 each as a food subsidy for our stay. We are now accompanied by an American lady named Phyllis from Pancrase America and all of us are chauffeured by mini bus towards Tokyo. After 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hrs in bumper to bumper traffic we finally arrive at the Suidobashi Grand Hotel Tokyo, only to be told at the desk that we must return to the airport as there had been a “hell of a balls up” with our luggage. Some idiot had picked up one of our ports by mistake, in the meantime we picked up the only bags left at airport (one not ours). Oitate and myself do a return trip just as airport is about to close, costing me through toll gates about 6000 yen (nearly \$100). The customs officers then wanted, because of the mystery mix-up to go through our port but as I didn't have the key, thought it more important to knock-off rather than pursue the regulations. Arrived back at hotel around midnight. Mick had settled Jenny into her room and was waiting in the lobby area for our return. After purchasing 2 litres of bottled water for \$9.00. Went to bed without any tea; too tired to worry about it.

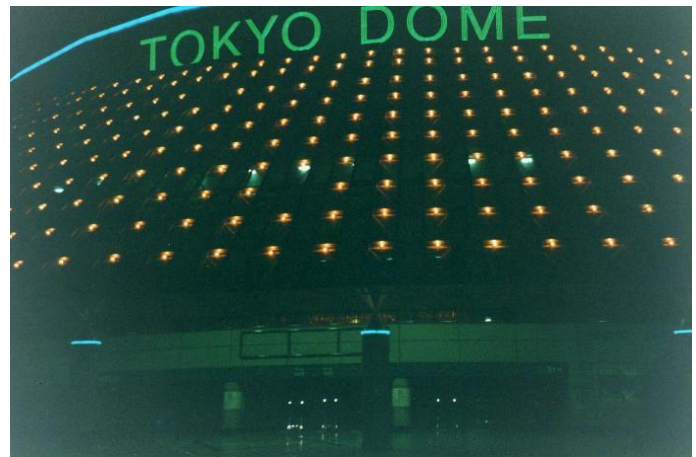
SATURDAY 27/10/01: “Happy Birthday Belinda!”



We got up before 7 a.m., checked out breakfast possibilities at Hotel and decided to go for a walk to get some shots and with the help of Oitate’s supplied map had breakfast at McDonalds. Pointing at meal selections on their menu was the best way to order. Back to rooms, Mick to try to snooze, I to ring and apologise regarding luggage mix-up and refresh ourselves before attacking Tokyo’s Subway System to get to the training Dojo. Jenny was nearly knocked down by cyclists on footpath as the traffic is such that it is too dangerous to ride bike on roadway! Left to go to training, trying to negotiate the subway with much difficulty! Departed Suidobashi Station – Jinbochi – Otemachi – Hibya – Kasumigaseki – Roppongi and then Hiro-o Station. Now walked to the Pancrase Dojo at Minato-ku. Mick weighed in on scales at 80.1kg (his maximum limit is 80 kg) took off shirt 79.7 kg. After training walked for miles around Hiro-o area, visited local shrine etc. Witnessed small Japanese lady spoon holy water from sacred fountain at shrine. Incredible variations of sports and prestige cars. Got off subway on way home and visited Hibya Park. Had to sacrifice our seat to a strange Japanese man who persisted with “bench free now yes?”

Tokyo Dome City is only just opposite Hotel, have taken some shots of roller coaster rides etc. Michael’s martial arts event “The Pancrase 2001 Proof Tour” will be held at the Korakuen Hall situated within the Tokyo Dome City.

4 p.m. finds our video camcorder battery flat, plug in socket for recharger is different voltage, need to purchase an adapter as soon as possible. We decided to catch up on a bit of rest. Mick couldn’t sleep again, so went out for a nibble and sight-see. Mick accompanies us into the restaurants but always brings his own specific food supplies; rice & canned tuna in spring water (the Japanese call it Sea Chicken?).



We explored streets, bought expensive grapes and bananas from fruit stall to take back to the hotel.

Explored Tokyo Dome City tonight and witnessed outstanding air-assisted water fountains which operated to symphony music, with coloured lights. Home to bed.

SUNDAY 28/10/01: Late rise 7:30 a.m. Mick went for walk before we woke. Had his own breakfast. Jenny & I had our first buffet “American Style” breakfast at the hotel for 1200 yen each, very satisfying will eat there every morning from now on. American fighter Nathan Marquardt, (who is currently middleweight title holder for Pancrase), his manager Will and his corner man all accompanied us to the Dojo today and we all trained and got photos taken together.



Jenny couldn't resist having a skite while Mick was doing his stretching routine, she showed her “hands flat on floor technique” telling all that “Michael inherited her good flexibility”. Also when Mick and I were training in the Pancrase Ring, she raced up in front of all calling for a halt to proceedings to protect Col from overdoing himself. Mick's body weight today was 80.5 kg so we may have to be careful. Finished training at

1:30 p.m. and went for walk to the Arisagawa pond area. It was drizzling rain but the pond area was so peaceful that we continued to walk and we also watched some old Japanese men fishing for relaxation in what appeared to be about 12 inches of water. Observed waterfalls and ducks.

Toilets are different in Japan with no seat to sit on. They use a ‘floor toilet’ set up where you are required to squat down on your haunches to do your business!(Jenny only used these on urgent occasions).

Found a good International Supermarket, I bought half dozen Kirinichiban Beer, Jenny purchased a nice bottle of W.A. red wine, camembert cheese, olives, water crackers. Mick also purchased some of his supplies before we traveled back to Suidobashi by Subway. Really getting the feel for our cheap underground transport.

MONDAY 29/10/01: Today is weigh-in day, scheduled at about 2 p.m.

Off for a good buffet breakfast again early this morning, nice selection of sausages, eggs, rissoles, fresh fruit, rolls, juices, plus also Asian style food to choose from. Jenny was not keen on their strong coffee and powdered green tea in tiny cups. Mick will have his two spoons of oats, two scoops of protein



powder and hot water in his room again. After weigh-in he plans to boil some sweet potatoes in his hotel room kettle! 9:30 a.m. we take the Subway and travel to the Temple at Asakusa and get some good camcorder footage of Shrines, Statues, Temple, Holy Water and Sacred Incense etc. We buy a fan for Colena and empower it with the incense smoke which is said to contain good luck and healing property.

Travel home, Mick and I travel by Pancrase bus to the weigh-in. Get good camcorder footage during weigh-in. Mick was well under his weight limit at the official weigh-in with a 78.55 kg body weight. His slight carbohydrate and water depletion last night and this morning worked out well. Mick was now interviewed(through translations) by the Pancrase Internet Website owners and had required photos taken etc. After the weigh-in Mick and I, in preference to traveling home with group go shopping and take the Subway home. Mick stocked up on spring water, rice and sweet potatoes to ensure adequate hydration and energy levels in preparation for his fight tomorrow night.



We all huddled around camcorder screen in hotel room and checked out the days filming together. Mick has food in room before we all go off for our nightly jaunt, walking for miles in a new direction from the Suidobashi Hotel into the surrounding districts. Took camcorder coverage of local gambling (ginko machines) and then walked around the Tokyo Dome City area. Mick snuck into the Tokyo Dome Hotel Skyscraper and traveled by elevator to the top floor of the building. Jenny will always remember the beautiful lights and fountains around the city. Went home and watched video footage in room together.

TUESDAY 30/10/01: Today is fight day. Mick joined us in a much awaited Hotel buffet breakfast this morning. Afterwards we utilise the above ground railway system that at times was even more confusing than the underground due to the fact that it had no English conversions. We traveled to the outskirts of Tokyo and explore the magnificent park areas and the ancient Meiji Shrine.

At about 4:30 p.m. we are escorted by Phyllis across to the Tokyo Dome in readiness for Mick's fight. We are admitted free of charge and are given VIP backstage passes by Oitate and are shown to ring-side seats which were probably worth about \$500 a piece. Mick's dressing room is below ground but easy to find as his name is above the door. He shares it with other 'blue corner' Japanese fighters. Many of the fighters are now inside the ring doing some last minute training including Mick's opponent Koji Oishi. Most of the fighters are practicing their wrestling techniques with their training partners. Oishi



obviously is intending to take Mick to the ground immediately if possible, as he practices his low dive for the ankle continually during his warm-up. Due to etiquette reasons Mick waits for Oishi to complete his warm-up session before stepping up into the ring and getting a feel for the fighting surface himself. Mick does some light stretching, fighting combinations and shadow sparring techniques before we both headed back to his dressing room for the final time before his battle. We exchange 'pleasantries' as much as possible (language barrier) with the other fighters and soon found out that they were all in awe of Oishi's speed strength and wrestling ability. He was also obviously a local favourite as a Fight Magazine had two square inches photo and coverage of the Australian fighter while Oishi had one and a half full pages of Interview. Mick with his mainly stand up style of Martial Arts technique is classified as a "Striker", while the Japanese "Grapplers" prefer to avoid these confrontations by utilising 'take down' techniques to get their opponents to the floor. Mick and I had discussed this previously many times and we knew that Oishi would be very adamant on trying to take the fight to the ground as quick as possible.



The arena was completely sold out, ticket holders ranging from teenage fight fans, adult men and women and also many older business type men in suit and tie! All flags of the represented countries were hanging high above and behind the ring with the Australian, American and the Japanese flags beside a few fight group logos.

After a combined family prayer and hug we entered the pavilion to Mick's pre selected music "Consequences" by Iced Earth. Mick told me later that the feelings he was getting seemed surreal and

almost overwhelming. The combination of the song, lights, crowd and TV cameras was quite a sight to behold. The moment Mick steps foot onto the ring mat he is momentarily distracted

by a slither of glass straight into the bottom of his foot- could be tactics, most likely accidental but glass is not a common problem in an elevated corner of a fighting ring?

The clash of Martial Arts styles commenced with both Mick and Oishi circling around very quickly at different angles waiting for the right opening. Oishi dove in low underneath one of Mick's strikes and attempted to take Mick to the ground. But Mick was able to quickly gain a solid base and nullified the attack. Over 2 ½ minutes went by with Oishi





repeatedly attempting to take Mick down with Mick standing strong and using a variety of punches to Oishi's body and head. Mid way through the round the fight hit the ground with the Japanese crowd and officials obviously being impressed with Mick having repelled Oishi's take downs for so long. This time of resistance alone was longer than both of the previous two Australian competitors had lasted in their entire

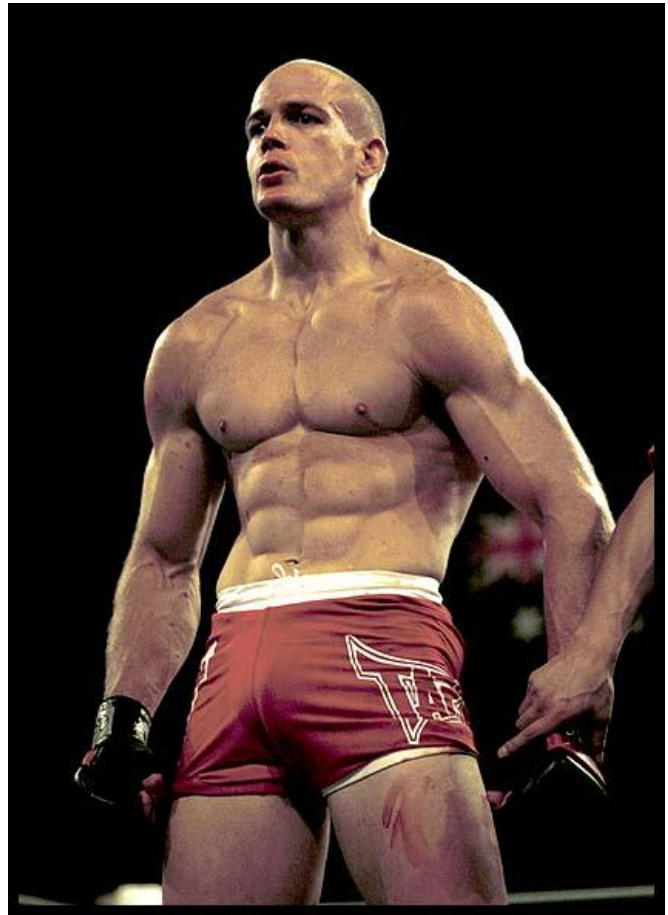
bouts combined. (One being knocked out and the other submitting to an arm bar technique). Mick now secured his 'guard position' and proceeded to score with a multitude of punches and also some good heel strikes to Oishi's kidneys. As Mick was under the ropes the Ref calls out in Japanese followed immediately by the commentator's interpretation to English "stop fighting don't move"

which then allowed them to be bodily dragged towards a clear position away from the ropes. The fight was eventually stood back up and Mick was able to land with a couple of kicks before Oishi's attained his second takedown. But Mick was able to counter all of Oishi's attempts for a more solid attacking position or the use of any submission techniques. The second



round was very similar to the first with Oishi sacrificing a potentially spectacular variety of Martial Arts Techniques for a very defensive holding and positioning strategy on the mat (as he new that a successful takedown and top position scored heavily in the minds of the Japanese judges). This was obviously frustrating Mick but he fought on and nearly submitted Oishi in a very tight "Guilotine" submission hold, but Oishi's head finally popped out. Oishi nearly attained the full mount position towards the final seconds of Round 2 and was able to score with a couple of glancing punches.

The fight ended up going the full distance and was a very close split decision win to the Japanese fighter Oishi (with one judge awarding the fight a draw). Mick was very happy to do full time against a submission wrestler of Oishi's caliber and showed good sportsmanship by congratulating and embracing his opponent as well as recognising the oppositions corner and also the crowd. We then retired to the dressing room area where Mick sat for a post fight camera interview preceding with his mother's concerned arrival to the men's dressing rooms to see if he was still in one piece. After Mick had showered and put on his casual clothes went back to our ringside seating position to watch the other fights. During an intermission period Mick had photographs taken with a number of fighting celebrities and was also invited back to compete again in Japan by Pancrase Japan's leader as well as being offered a very generous offer of free accommodation and 'Uchi Deshi' type



training at the Pancrase live-in Dojo. But Mick had already decided before going to Japan that regardless of the outcome he was not going to continue a competition fighting career as he had other more special and personally important life avenues in his life to consider. So he just simply acknowledged them for their generous offer then we walked back to our seats. The final fight of the night was Nathan Marquardt's title defense, which he successfully defended by winning his bout in the second round with a leg triangle submission.

Upon departing the event Mick felt a bit out of place when he was asked by fans for his autograph and was also accosted by a Japanese girl who told him in broken English how he had affected her!

We walked back to the Hotel together and celebrated Mick's achievement, which was a win in all the ways that mattered. Mick joined us in a Kirinichiban and even sparked up a 'Peace' cigarette which he got from a vending machine on the way back to the hotel. We retired in good spirits with a tour planned for tomorrow being our final day as we depart the hotel at 7 p.m.

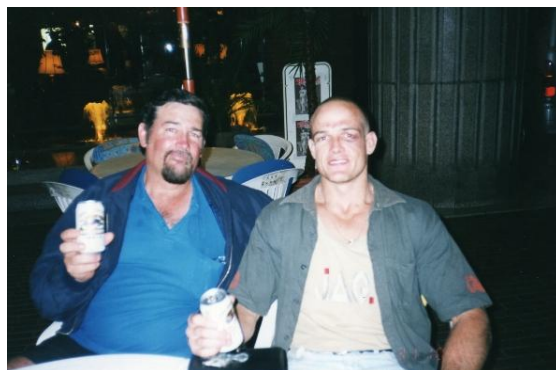


WEDNESDAY 31/10/01: Had our normal buffet breakfast at the Hotel this morning with Michael enjoying eating the same food as us for a change.

As we had to check out of the hotel by 10 a.m. we packed our ports and left them at the reception desk. But we still had until 7 p.m. to enjoy our last day of sight seeing and gift buying in Japan. We decided to visit by train, an area of Tokyo known as 'Electric City', everything was twice the price as in Australia even duty-free. We enjoyed the electrical

displays in Skyscraper after Skyscraper with all of the most recent technology on display from Sony, Panasonic and so on. As we still didn't have many souvenirs to take home yet, we decided to take another trip to the Asakusa Temple as the Bazaar there offered a good variety of nice gifts.

We eventually return to Suidobashi, have dinner at KFC and have a couple of Kirinichibans outside the lobby of the Hotel before being picked up by Oitate who drove us to the airport. After a few hiccups, we finally board the plane after being taken by airport taxi-tram (a good five miles) before arriving at our runway. We board the plane after making sure that we purchased a big bottle of Kahlua for Belinda from the duty free shop.



We lift off at about 9:30 p.m., settling in as soon as the plane leveled out, to enjoy a few more Kirinichibans. I slept a fair amount during the return flight. Mick gazed out the window & Jenny took some pills to combat air-sickness (washing them down with red wine!) At one stage she awoke in a panic, suggesting that her feet were back to front or her shoes were. Michael and I split our sides laughing, as she was convinced that her swollen feet were a matter of life and death.

THURSDAY 1/11/01: Watching the magnificent sunrise through the cloud layer below us was beautiful and inspiring to witness. Michael took a few photos and it seemed no time at all after breakfast that we were admiring from the air the Glass House Mountains, then Brisbane and then the airport runway.



Upon departing the plane Mick bought some 70 proof Kahlua with some of his Pancrase earnings and after following advice of some signs disposed of some left over fruit etc, in the quarantine bins provided. Just as well because the sniffer dog tracked the smell down at customs, at the time I was actually (conveniently) carrying Mick's banana smelling port with me and was given a thorough 'once over' by the security officers.

Tony and Leila were waiting to greet us at the airport and after many hugs we all returned together to Caboolture Park, where we joined up with Belinda and Brian, and Ange and Callum. Ange had thoughtfully set up a picnic brunch, which was enjoyed by all, along with the sharing of some of the many great memories which Jenny and Mick and myself were all blessed with, engrained deep within our hearts and minds.

