

NAENAE TO AMERICA AND BACK AGAIN

BY BILLY GRAHAM

Hi Folks,

Thanks to Air New Zealand and the Vodafone World of Difference Foundation I have just been on a boxing coach's dream trip to the USA. I was invited to the final of the Armed Forces Boxing Competition at the Detroit Athletic Club. What a grand place for a boy from Naenae; the shower was bigger than my house!

The tournament was very upmarket with strict protocol. The National Anthem was sung and the referee gave thanks to God for a safe night. Everyone clapped at the right times and no one yelled out.

The purpose of the visit was to reinforce my relationship with the Air Force National Coach Ed Weichers so I can take some of my fighters to train at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. It will be a life changing experience! I also managed to go to the Muhammad Ali Centre in Louisville, Kentucky. It was great to see what one man can do, very impressive.

Then it was off to a game of gridiron;



75,000 people and we were given ringside seats. Outside the stadium everyone was playing Corn Hole; a game only played in Ohio. It is just great so I brought back the rules and measurements and Packworx in Seaview have made up the game for me. We launched it at our recent Boxing Academy break-up. It was a lovely evening, held on the lawn outside the gym and the boys laughed and loved it. Thanks Ohio for your Corn Hole game, it's a hit!

I also went to a professional fight night in Kentucky and was invited into the ring and introduced to the crowd as Australasian Boxing Champion, Billy Graham from New Zealand. What a buzz. I got a roar from the crowd. I was the only white guy in the room!

Aaron Pryor, World Light-Welter Weight Boxing Champion was one of the celebrities and I brought back photos and signed gloves for my boys at the Naenae Boxing Academy.

My friends from Kentucky, Mike and Debbie Gardner and their children Jimmy and Jaci

are household names in Ohio and Jimmy races Formula One cars. He arranged for me to do three laps with a young lady who is a champion driver. She strapped me in, gave me a wink and let out the clutch. We drove at 170 miles per hour round the track! White must really suit me, when I got out of the car they told me I looked great.

I learned more from that one trip than any other I have been on. It was non-stop from morning till night and I loved every minute. But there is no place like home and Naenae is it for me.

I got back on the Friday morning and Saturday (Election Day) we were involved in Big Splash – painting the Naenae Shopping Centre. We started at 7am and finished at 7pm. It was so encouraging to see people from all walks of life wanting to make a difference in our suburb!

The Naenae Boxing Academy has now closed for the year but we look forward to seeing your young fellas back on February 2, 2009. See our new website for details – www.naenaeboxingacademy.co.nz

P.S. our American friends have put us on YouTube – Billy The Kid Fitness

Have a great break over Christmas!

All the Best.

