

“Different gravy” – Calum sums up superstar opponents

Out on the pitch it was a case of the missing (Lionel) Messi.

Argentina’s 2022 world cup winning captain nursed an injury keeping him out of his Inter Miami team’s glamour friendly with a Hong Kong X1 featuring Calum Hall, former Hutchison Vale, Hibs Youth, Edinburgh City and Gala Fairydean defender.

But Spanish pair Sergio Busquets (143 caps over 15 international seasons) and Jordi Alba (93 caps) were sent on, even if Uruguayan superstar Luis Suarez was another non-starter through injury. Calum was thrilled to be rubbing shoulders with such talent – and learning along the way.

Here, in his own words, is how Calum, now a full-time player, summed up his journey from Scotland’s Lowland League with Fairydean in just over six months.

“The whole experience was unbelievable. From the coach journey from the hotel where we had a pre-game meal to the stadium was something I’ll never experience again.

“People were chasing after the bus through our police escort

waving and taking pictures. Thousands of them. That's where the excitement was really starting to kick in (and) as we were getting closer to the stadium you could tell this was something massive.

"The Hong Kong stadium was full as well when we arrived almost two hours before kick-off you could feel the atmosphere already. Coming out to warm up was something I'll never forget. The roar of the crowd was deafening.

"The stadium is massive and with 40,000 people there everyone just blended in in a strange way but I could hardly hear myself speak with the noise of the fans.

"I knew prior to the game I'd be coming on second half as we had two teams pretty much similar (with) one playing first half the other the second and when I noticed none of the bigger names were starting it made me feel a bit more excited that surely a couple of them had to make an appearance in the second half.

"Only Jordi Alba and Sergio Busquets came on, but even if none of the bigger names had come on the experience was just unbelievable. The game itself was very enjoyable. I didn't want it to end.

"When Jordi Alba came on, he was on my side and straight away you could tell this guy had played at a much higher level. The touch and composure was first class.

"So, just to see that in the flesh while being on the pitch at the same time as him was an amazing feeling and lesson if you like. Busquets the same. Different gravy.

"Arguably two of the best ever in their positions so a dream come true to share a pitch with them.

"Everyone was a bit disappointed to not see Lionel Messi or Luis Suarez play but injuries happen and that's just football.

“Afterwards I was only a couple feet away from Messi but trying to get a photo was impossible with all the security around him – even in the tunnel.

“I managed to get a picture with Jordi Alba, Busquets and Suarez as well as (Inter Miami co-owner) David Beckham which is probably my favourite!

“I managed to exchange shirts with Jordi Alba and he signed it for me which was a nice touch. Something so special to remind me of that day that isn’t a photo so I’ll definitely be getting that framed and up on the wall!

“Overall, just a dream day. I think I’ll struggle to experience something like that again involving some of the best players to ever play football along with David Beckham. Something I’ll cherish for the rest of my life!”



A tangible (signed) souvenir of Calum's big day



Calum Hall with Inter Miami co-owner, David Beckham

