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Thai Boys Talk About Experience in Flooded Cave

The 12 boys and their soccer coach rescued from a flooded cave in northern Thailand appeared in public for the first time on Wednesday.

The boys are ages 11 to 16. They waved, smiled and offered the traditional Thai greeting “wai” on a national television broadcast.

They wore shirts with an image of a wild boar. That is what the soccer team is called. They kicked footballs around the television **set** which had goalposts and nets like a soccer field. A large sign had the words “Bringing the Wild Boars Home.”

One of the boys, Adul Sam-on, described the moment when two British cave divers found the group on July 2. “It was magical,” he said. “I had to think a lot before I could answer their questions.”

The discovery launched the rescue effort that brought them all to safety over three days. Members of the Thai navy SEALs and an international team of cave-diving experts organized the rescue effort.

Coach Ekkapol Chantawong has been credited with keeping the boys alive. He said the order in which the boys were rescued did not depend on the state of their health.

He said, “The ones whose homes are the furthest went first, so they could tell everyone that the boys were fine.”

“We only drank water”

The group had planned to explore the Tham Luang cave complex after soccer practice on June 23. But rainwater flooded the tunnels, trapping them inside.

“We took turns digging at the cave walls,” Ekkapol said. “We didn’t want to wait around until **authorities** found us.”

One of the boys added, “We used stones to dig in the cave. We dug 3 to 4 meters.”

The group had no food on a trip which they thought would only last an hour in the cave. For nearly 10 days, they survived on water dripping from **stalactites** in the cave.

One of the boys, Tee, said, “We only drank water.”

Titan, the team’s youngest member, said, “I had no strength. I tried not to think about food so I didn’t get more hungry.”

One boy was worried about his parents. He said, “I was afraid. That I wouldn’t go home and I would get scolded by my mother.”

Two of the boys held up a drawing of Saman Kunan. He was the former Thai navy diver who died while preparing for their rescue.

“Everyone was very sad,” said the coach, Ekkapol. He added that the boys would spend time as Buddhist religious workers to honor the diver’s memory.

“They felt like they were the reason he had to die and his family had to suffer.”

I’m Jonathan Evans.

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