

Army Tests Juniors

No softballs were pitched, no bats swung nor any bases run yet the Junior White Sox Squad training camp hosted by the New Zealand Army at Burnham Military Camp over the weekend was a significant milestone in preparation for the Junior World Series in December 2011.

The weekend was organised by former Junior White Sox technical coach Sue Harrison, who as a territorial soldier of the NZ Army recognised that the squad would benefit from training that tested fitness, stamina, strength, agility, leadership and mental toughness. Coach Venita Hokai believes that to be internationally world class athletes the squad needs to "toughen up" and the NZ Army is ideal place for elite athletes to do just that. From their army physical training instructors Jason Keno (aka the Boss) and Jessica Blair designed a programme based on drills, tests and standards that soldiers undertake.



Micah Ropata, Krysta Hoani, Kat Hiku, Arahia Fowell, Beth Stavert and anchoring the team is Jordan-Leigh Koni

At first the squad thought the toughest test would be no access to cell phones for the weekend - but they were wrong. After arriving at the mess hall for dinner and getting settled into barracks (including learning how to make a bed army style), the squad assembled at the gym. After introductions the squad were given a taste of army life by being taught the fundamentals of marching and teamwork.

The first morning was a wakeup call at 5.45am for a 6am start that led to a Required Fitness Level (RFL) test of a 2.4km run in 12mins 20 seconds, 20 push ups and 60 curl ups - all before breakfast! The day then got better with various physical and mentally challenging activities before heading off to be introduced to the Confidence Course. One of the many highlights of Day One was a visit by Dean Rice who has recently retired as coach of the NZ White Sox. Dean gave a sobering but inspirational talk about what it takes to compete at a world level including the need for self motivation, commitment and hard work.

Day Two was called "the longest day" for good reason as we were roused at 3.45am. The first task was a 2km stretcher run (syndicate teams of six with one person being carried on a stretcher), then a task that included carrying a tractor tyre, iron bar, and two 50 litre water containers to set points around the camp, assembling the obstacles in a pre-determined pattern, before being sent off to the next point. It was so dark that the instructors gave each person a glow stick to hang around their necks to see with. This also served the purpose of keeping track of the syndicate teams as they ran off into the dark. Breakfast finally came at 7am before further competition between syndicates including a tug of war; a timed row, run, bike challenge and a log carry race back to the start of the Confidence Course.



The second run thru the Confidence Course was faster as the squad were more familiar, but because this came at the tail end of almost 7 hours of continuous physical exertion it proved a challenge in stamina and mental toughness. The tail end of the camp comprised of presentations by management staff on the JWS programme, the challenge ahead and the clear message that it's up to each individual to do the work to get there.

Overall it was a tough weekend with some players being found out for not putting in the needed fitness work prior to the weekend. Squad members summed the weekend up as "awesome", "inspirational", "motivating" and "hard" but all learned that even when you are physically and mentally exhausted you can go further, and push harder. Limits were extended for all and it was an experience that the squad members will never forget.



The Junior White Sox squad, Coaches and Management extends to the NZ Army our utmost thanks and appreciation for the Tim, effort, energy, expertise and hospitality that we received. We know of at least one squad member who is very keen to join up and there may be others who follow. Arohanui kia koutou mo to awahi, mo to tautoko kia matou!

Con Course obstacle being negotiated by Rita Hokianga, Chance Warbrick, Te Reo Powhiri Matautia, Kuraroa Ratu-James, Santana Harris and Kingsley Avery

New Zealand Junior White Sox Squad 2010
Burnham Army Camp Training Weekend 24-27
September



Back Row: Aroha Metcalf (Manager), Kevin Gettins (Asst Coach), Robyn Hall, Te Reo Powhiri Matautia, Jordan-Leigh Koni, Danielle Tanoa, Chance Warbrick, Santana Harris, Kaysi Rawiri, Anita Leeuw, Kuraroa Ratu-James, Krysta Hoani, Faalele Tuala, Venita Hokai (Head Coach), Front Row: Arahia Fowell, Rita Hokianga, Kat Hiku, Micah Ropata, SSgt Nicky Hansen, WOII Jason Keno, Cpl Jessica Blair, Sgt Sue Harrison, Jordan Mumu, Keeley Wells, Kingsley Avery, Beth Stavert.