



WBSC

Men's Softball World Championship



CZECH REPUBLIC

JUNE 13, 2019 - JUNE 23, 2019



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I have great pleasure in presenting a report for my appointment to the sixteenth Men's World Softball Championships in Prague, Czech Republic – June 13th – 23rd 2019.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by sincerely thanking the following people and organisations for their assistance and support.

- Softball New Zealand, in particular Eugene Gilbert
- North Harbour Softball
- The National Umpire Staff
- Bob Stanton, Wayne Saunders and Santos Vasquez
- My employer, the ANZ Bank
- The WBSC umpiring Crew
- Prague Softball Association and Volunteers
- Tony Kaiaruna "TK". A great travelling companion
- The players and fans who attended the tournament
- My wife Karen who allows me to take these great opportunities

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS, ACCOMMODATION, LAUNDRY & TRANSPORT

The travel arrangements worked much better this time. This was in some part due to both of us agreeing to travel at the same time with no requirement to be in Prague early, plus the guidance from Tandem. Effectively we located the best available flights and had Tandem then deal with the airline. We chose to fly with Qatar Airlines as they had the best luggage allowance together with the most direct flight i.e. Auckland to Doha (18 hours) with a short layover and then Doha directly to Prague (6 hours). The most direct flights are usually the best and the 30kg luggage allowance made things simpler. I would fly Qatar again.

Upon arrival in Prague we were immediately picked up by a local volunteer in a rental van and taken directly to our hotel in the Prague suburbs. Unfortunately, our driver got lost and what should have been about an hour's trip to the hotel ended up taking 2 hours!

The cost of accommodation at Top Hotel Praha for one night was met by us as we had arrived a day early. Upon arrival we were able to check in and immediately went site seeing in the City.

The accommodation for the remainder of the tournament was met by WBSC and single rooms were provided for each crew member. The rooms were very large but unfortunately the air conditioning was not the best. Breakfast was included in the room rate and all other meals were supplied by the tournament organisers at the park. These meals were interesting and usually suitable albeit the European diet in the Czech Republic takes some getting used to. Usually the meals consisted of meat and potatoes cooked within an inch of their lives. Bottled water was continuously supplied throughout the tournament.

The hotel was on the outskirts of town and was about 45 minutes from one park (Prague) and 90 minutes from the other park Havlickuv Brod (HB) depending upon traffic. Transport was provided by locals driving rental vans. Allocations were done on the basis of doing either a 10:30 – 4:30 time slot or a 1:30 – 7:30 time slot so we were not at the park all day at any time. In fact, due to the van sizes, it was necessary to leave for the field or depart after your games per your schedule. With games starting at 10:30 at HB an early start was

required and with the late games scheduled for 7:30 arrival back from HB was usually just before midnight.

Laundry was organised with a local business who would collect any gear only (no extra laundry) at 11:45 and it would be back to the hotel before 6:30. This worked well in the main and given the hours, per above, dealing with laundry ourselves would have been impossible. The cost of this laundry was ultimately met by WBSC, which was appreciated.

Parks & Facilities

These World Championships were played at two separate parks. The primary stadium was on the outskirts of Prague and the other park was about 90 minutes away in HB. Both parks were of a very high standard in both playing facilities and other amenities including Big Screens, Fan Zones etc. The changing facilities for umpires at Prague were small but adequate and there was also a “relax room” available between games with coffee & tea making facilities etc. The changing rooms at HB were of an exceptional standard and is certainly something to aspire to here in NZ. In addition, there were very good food and drink outlets available. One of the favourites stands for the umpire crews was Haka Pies and, without doubt, everyone’s go to was the ice-cream stand. Meals were provided for the crew at both parks with the food provided at HB being a little superior. Plus, at HB there was home baking for the WBSC staff!

THE UMPIRE CREW

There were 20 umpires appointed to the tournament plus 3 supervisors.

UMPIRE SUPERVISORS:

Robert Stanton, Umpire-in-Chief. Assistant Umpire-in-Chief Santo Vasquez – Puerto Rico and Wayne Saunders – New Zealand.

UMPIRE CREW:

Botswana – MATABOGE, Abel
Japan - KUSAMOTO, Matsunori
Czech Republic - HORA, Jan
Czech Republic – DOSTAL, Jiri
Denmark – JAKOBSEN, Jens
Germany - LOHNERT, Thomas
Canada – GALLANT, Andrew
Canada – GERRIOR, Darren
Colombia - ARTEAGE GONZALES, Juan Felipe
Cuba - CARBALLO, Enrique
Cuba – CUE, Maykel
Mexico - – SALAZAR LEAL, Raul
United States – HAND, Jon
United States – POHL, Greg
United States – SELDEN, Dave
Venezuela – TOVAR SERRANO, Manuel
Australia – MCCAULEY, Damien
Australia – RINDFLEISH, Scott
New Zealand – KAIARUNA, Tony
New Zealand – PORTEOUS, Mark

This was one of the best crews I have worked with. Whilst the usual language barriers etc. occurred, the unusual nature of working at two parks and the need to work together each day in the same crew, I think it made for a group that gelled well. As usual the feedback from Bob, Santos & Wayne was always insightful.

I participated in 18 games at the tournament. 4 Plates, 5 U1, 3 U2, 3 U3 and 3 clocks. I was fortunate enough to be appointed to the plate in the Argentina v Canada semi-final and as U1 on the final. The result of the Black Sox not making the final. I am pleased to say that my final evaluation was better than I personally expected. I believe it was as a direct result of the work I have put in to my fitness over the past six months.

BRIEF OVERVIEW

This was the first time the Men's World Championships had been held in Europe and because of that the effort that was put in to ensuring a successful tournament was very evident. Apart from the aforementioned transport and the vagaries of dealing with two separate parks the overall standard of organisation was very good. The teams also contributed to an outstanding tournament with the level of play, especially the improved level of the "minor" teams making for a well contested tournament. There were 16 teams in attendance and although there was an obvious separation with the top four, the next two tiers were not far behind. This was evident by some of the close scores and probably the upset of the tournament with Mexico beating the Black Sox. The tightness of the competition was also evident in the final games where Argentina beat Japan in a 9-inning tie-breaker and Canada edging NZ 2-1 in the bronze medal game.

Mechanics

We were sent updated four-man mechanics prior to the tournament and asked to review. It is obvious to me that SNZ are operating under the current and World's best practice. There was some strong discussion regarding a specific situation. This resulted in some robust discussion and agreement that the play was not adequately covered in the manual. If the situation called for it then the ability to move to where you have to get to all four elements is the primary focus. However, Bob had encouraged pre-game and post-game briefings that allowed us to sort these matters out. Bob highlighted the necessity to have these meetings regardless of whether you were umpiring in a World Championships or a local league game.

Points of Emphasis

At a pre-tournament meeting Bob outlined the points of emphasis for the tournament. These are embedded here but the primary ones were:



Points of
Emphasis.docx

- Stepping foot for pitchers being stationary
- Two second pause
- Quick umpire conferences
- Watch for Obstruction and Interference with some guidance on what constitutes O & I
- Controlling Time-outs between Catchers and Pitchers

TWENTY SECOND CLOCK

The twenty second clock was in use for all games and all teams and umpires were provided with the [20 second clock protocols](#). At this tournament the control of the clock was allocated to one of the crew which had the effect of ensuring the protocols were followed. The pitchers were well aware of the need to commence the pitch before the expiration of the time. There remains some uncertainty with the batters as to when and if they were allowed to call time and with this uncertainty most did not i.e. they stayed in the box. There was the occasional blip when the clock was reset rather than restarted and I was on a game where I had “stopped” the clock for the batter but when I restarted I discovered that my colleague had not stopped it when instructed and it ran out. I would suggest that the number of violations called could be counted on two hands and generally the impact of the clock was a considerable time saver. In addition to operating the clock the “clock umpire” also relayed substitutions and changes to the scorers who were some way away from the backstop. This was tricky at times especially when there were multiple changes being relayed and the game had been restarted, meaning that the umpire was trying to do two things at once!

SUMMARY

This was the most well-run tournament I have attended. The level of overall professionalism with the input from the people at WBSC is a major factor in this. The facilities were top-notch. The weather had a very minor impact which helped to ensure that games were usually on schedule. The provision of food, transport, accommodation, laundry and hydration was exceptional. One minor issue is getting pants hemmed but with the assistance of Kath Saunders we got by. The supervisors were a great support as were the Technical Coordinators. This was appreciated by all of the crew. The challenge will now be with New Zealand to match or better this in 2021

Mark Porteous

PHOTOS



What are we here for?



Southern Hemisphere crew: Abel (BOT), Scott (AUS), "Porty" & "TK" (NZ)



Clock Box



Semi-Final Canada v Argentina



Changing rooms at Havlickuv Brod



**Final Crew: Maykel Cue (CUB – U2),
Mark Porteous (NZ – U1), Dave Selden
(USA – P), Thomas Lohnert (GER – U3),
Jan Horo (CZE – Clock)**