



Travel Report for David Fortin, NZ umpire

WBSC 2017 Jnr Women's World Champs

Overview

This is my report for the WBSC 2017 Junior Women's World Championship held in Clearwater, Florida from 24-30 July 2017. It was an honour to be selected to represent New Zealand as my second international appointment at a WBSC event. Preparations began several months before the tournament in terms of logistics and also team-building exercises with the international crew. The Merle Butler Cup used a story-building competition this year and teams were created with the goal of enhancing communication between crew members of different countries and speaking different languages. My team included participants from the USA, Bahamas, Italy and Czech Republic and as the team leader, I created a private group Facebook page to facilitate our exchanges.

I left NZ in early July and spent a few weeks in Canada where I did some umpiring at the Kingston Axemen Invitational Tournament in Ontario. Games were held at Ken Garrett Memorial Park in Inverary over a 2-day weekend and I was appointed to plate the grand final. Thanks to local chief Brad Weese for inviting me and letting me crash at his place with 2 other out-of-town umpires. 7 games over 2 days and some good softball, 3 of the teams went to play in the ISC tournament later in the summer. I flew into Clearwater about 3 days before the tournament to get some local warm-up games and it turns out I was on the same plane as the Canadian team and sat right next to the coach and we had a good chat. Some severe thunderstorms in the area meant several of those games were delayed or cancelled so that was a bit hit-and-miss.

On the Saturday, I turned up at the accommodation for the umpires which was based at the Innisbrook golf resort at about a 40 minute drive from the ballpark. I met my roommate from Nicaragua Jose Rodriguez. We met the crew the following day and attended the technical meeting and the bat check session. We were briefed on the protocols for the 20-second clock and the 5th umpire system but the latter wasn't used at all due to the large number of games to cover at the tournament. The crew stayed at the golf resort and the accommodation provided was very comfortable, but the far away distance from the ballpark made travel and food arrangements quite challenging at times.

Crew

26 Teams participated in the world Champs as below



The crew included 30 umpires from 24 different countries:

UMPIRES – ÁRBITROS		
UIC - 🇨🇦 Bob STANTON		
ASS'T UIC - 🇺🇸 Christine DRUMM, 🇪🇨 Santos Vasquez ORTIZ and 🇯🇵 Haruhi GOTO		
🇦🇷 Javier PENARROYA (ARG)	🇦🇺 Jay GIBSON (AUS)	🇦🇺 Warren DUFF (AUS)
🇧🇦 Thomas SEARS (BAH)	🇧🇱 Mariana ATANASOVA (BUL)	🇨🇦 Scott MCLAREN (CAN)
🇨🇦 Annie MICHAUD (CAN)	🇨🇳 Zhiling YU (CHN)	🇹🇵 Ko Chin YU (TPE)
🇨🇺 Maikel CUE (CUB)	🇨🇪 Zdeněk ZIDEK (CZE)	🇫🇷 Franck LAUTIER (FRA)
🇩🇪 Christian SINGER (GER)	🇬🇧 Jana MCCASKILL (GBR)	🇬🇧 Bridget CAMERON (GBR)
🇮🇸 Brian ARON (ISR)	🇮🇹 Sabrina FABRIZI (ITA)	🇯🇵 Saeko SUDA (JPN)
🇯🇵 Masao OTA (JPN)	🇰🇷 Munsook JEON (KOR)	🇲🇽 Jorge ROJO (MEX)
🇳🇱 Bob GIESKENS (NED)	🇳🇿 David FORTIN (NZL)	🇳🇮 Jose RODRIGUEZ (NIC)
🇵🇷 Jose MORALES (PUR)	🇷🇸 Kgatla KGOMO (RSA)	🇺🇸 Cindi BRUNO (USA)
🇺🇸 Matt DUNBAR (USA)	🇺🇸 Jason GEHOSKI (USA)	🇺🇸 Mindy VILLA (USA)

Tournament

The opening ceremonies were Umpires were assigned to 2 or 3 games every day and the ballpark complex included 4 skin diamonds which were very well maintained by an extensive grounds crew. The changing rooms for umpires were provided in the form of trailers brought in for the occasion as there are no permanent facilities for this purpose.

All games used the 20-second clock but the plate umpire remained responsible in handling changes and substitutions. The weather conditions were variable with rain at different times during the week and some very hot conditions with high humidity and temperatures over 32 degs most days. I never drank so much water in my life just to keep up with dehydration meant drinking close to 3 litres per day.

The level of softball was variable due to the high number of emerging countries involved with the championships for the first time. The highlight of the week for me was for me was on day6 on the 1 vs 1 semi-final game involving top two seed teams USA vs Japan, I was appointed on 2nd base with colleagues Annie Michaud on plate from Canada, Jay Gibson from Australia on first and Mariana Prins-Atanasova from Bulgaria on 3rd. USA went through to the final to meet Japan again the next day. Another highlight involved a pool play game where 3 out of four crew were French-speaking, possibly a first in the history of softball world champs; with colleagues Annie Michaud (Canada) and Frank Lautier (France) and yours truly! (NZ).

It was a long week of softball due to the heat and humidity but what a fantastic crew to work with a proportion of which did not speak English at all but we managed to communicate and that's where my few words of Spanish and Italian picked up from travel became quite handy! Through our facebook page for the tournament. Many of us still keep in touch on a regular basis. I was the only appointee from NZ this time and it was a bit different from the previous year at the Jnr Men's Champs in Midland but I already knew several umpires from Australia, Jay, Bridget and Jana which I knew from the ISF clinic in 2014 and Brian Aron from Israel from Midland. Once again, a great experience as an umpire not just for the on-diamond experience but also for the human experience of meeting colleagues from all over the world and making so many new friends.

Acknowledgements

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Photo Album



Crew 1 vs 1 USA vs Japan on day6: Jay Gibson, Annie Michaud and Mariana Prins-Atanasova



with roomie on plate, Jose from Nicaragua



with Brian Aron (Israel), Matt Dunbar (USA), Jay Gibson (Aust)



First night on the back of a pickup truck going out to find food!



With the boss!



My crew for one of my plate games on day1



with Brian and Maykel



My crew for one of my plate games Mexico vs China



The French Connection game: with Franck from France, Annie from Canada and Mindy from USA