

TONY KAIARUNA
2015 Travel Report

2015 WBSC JUNIOR WOMENS
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
OKLAHOMA CITY USA

August 8 - 16, 2015

Wednesday 5th, 2015, departed Wellington for Oklahoma USA via Auckland touching down at LAX in Los Angeles then onto Denver, Colorado and our final destination Oklahoma City, USA.

Arriving two days earlier in Oklahoma prior to the tournament proved invaluable for my colleague Tara Harris and me.

With pick ups at Will Rogers International Airport and check in at the hotel complete, the day was spent acclimatising to the very hot and humid 35°C weather; remember it was a cool 12°C when we left NZ.

Thursday 6th, we headed to the home of USA softball "the Amateur Softball Association of America" - ASA for short. While there we took part in scrimmage games with local college and visiting oversea's teams. The heat of 38°C was difficult to cope with initially but as the days rolled by we acclimatised very quickly without too many problems. The key here was hydration, hydrating weeks out before leaving NZ.

Friday 6th, 24 umpires and 3 Umpire in Chief (UIC) from around the world gathered for a night of introductions and conversation. With this out of the way Director of umpires and UIC for World Softball Baseball Confederation – Softball Division (WBSC-SD) Bob Stanton, Assistant UIC Kevin Ryan - ASA and Assistant UIC Christine Drum - ASA, advised us of the schedule from here on in.

Saturday 7th, we were back at the home of softball for the technical meeting and the presentation of the WBSC-SD tournament uniforms supplied by Mizuno along with the exchange of gifts from each federation.

Sunday 8 - Saturday 16, "PLAY BALL" the WBSC-SD Junior Women's World Championship was under way in the blistering heat of 39°C and humidity of 80%. Hydration was going to be the key to fitness on and off the field. I must congratulate Wayne from ASA and his wonderful crew who tirelessly kept all the Blue Crew well watered and feed.

Each day brought with it, its own challengers and the heat never relented. This was the most worrying throughout the championship, however the experience of the crew and with the constant reminder of hydration, hydration, hydration, we were able to step up to the task and completed each days' assignments without any problems.

Comradery amongst the multi national umpiring crew was an experience I will never forget. The mix was made up of umpires from Asia, Europe, South America, North America and Oceania all representing their federations. Five of the crew spoke little English however the international language of communication never challenged us throughout the championship.

By the time the championship had come to an end, we all had forged friendships with everlasting memories that will remain for life.

I am privileged and humbled to be given the opportunity to represent my country and the SNZ umpiring program, there is no doubt that our selection process and mentorship of umpires attending these international championships is on par with world's best practice and was proven on the last day where my colleague Tara Harris was appointed crew chief to the second division championship game.

For me, being appointed to the Gold Medal Championship game at 1st base was an overwhelming honour and privilege not only for myself but for our program.

Observations - some important information for future travelling umpires.

- *Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance – ensure you are well prepared.*
- *Communicate early with your UIC and/or the NUS, i.e. pre- tournament protocols and readiness*
- *Research the country / towns history, culture, climate, etc*
- *Research the crew and be mindful of each others cultural or religious beliefs*
- *Be honourable and work to world's best practice*
- *Finally – don't forget to be a student of the game*

I would like take the opportunity to recognise the following people
UIC Oceania Wayne Saunders, UIC SNZ Mentor Wiremu Tamaki, UIC Wellington
Jeremy England, National Umpiring Staff "NUS" and Softball New Zealand

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