

Friendship Series 2009

Blacktown Olympic Park



Number 1 Diamond

July 11-17 2009

What can one say but wow.....what an awesome experience all round.....can't believe it.....what's next.....

July 11 2009 I boarded my flight 458, Virgin Blue bound for Sydney Australia via Auckland. My first taste of umpiring abroad!

Nerves were high, as to be expected but after settling into my flight on the way over I knew it was for real. I was quite relaxed when I arrived and even more when I met up with my fellow Kiwi umpiring mate Dave Fortin.

Our Host had organised for us to be taken out to Rooty Hill some 45 minutes from the airport, to meet up with the rest of the crew for dinner. They had just completed the third day of their four day Clinic before arriving. It was great to meet the crew and be part of an international abroad tournament.

There were 10 members all up with Andrew and Scott Rindfleish facilitating the Clinic and Scott mentoring the crew members throughout the tournament.



The Crew Sarah,Dave,Sharon,Haydon,Scot,Hori,Pinkie,Chris,Gavin

The rest of the crew came from Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Newcastle and Sydney and Level 3-7 a great mix.

Our team consisted of three Kiwis, two expats and five Aussies. The third Kiwi was Chris Reve from Auckland.

Dave and I joined the clinic on their last day and it was quite enjoyable. The Australian Programme is pretty similar to ours but more theoretical as in rules knowledge and mechanics. They move on their mechanics, I called it "Run Forrest Run."

It was great comparing how we did things to there way and the consistency in which we both did things.....that was awesome!

We spent all day at the clinic from 8.30am-5.00pm then straight into Game Time. They had three games scheduled that evening. Dave and I were working together with an Honorary Kiwi for that game on the second time slot at 7.00pm, Australia Women Gold vs Australia Women Green.

Blacktown Olympic Park is an amazing venue with four skin diamonds all of world class and with lights. Number one was out for the night so we were assigned to the number two diamond. The evening was cool and both teams were gearing up for a battle of supremacy. There was no holds barred as both teams slugged it out. Some great plays were had but Australia Gold came out victorious 5-2. The standard of play was excellent and with this only being our first game of the tournament, I was looking forward to more of the same.

The roster was four games per day with finals day having only two rounds and then the final. The last two time slots we had the assistance of other blues whom offered their services after work so each night we had different blues to work with which was really interesting.

In the women's section there were seven teams, two from New Zealand, two from Australian Squads and three representing their Australian State – New South Wales, Sunshine State and Adelaide. This section was really competitive and standard of ball was "out of here"

All the Aussie girls play hard entertaining ball which made our jobs really enjoyable as we had to be on our game as well. The Kiwi Girls were competitive as well but didn't quite have the "X" factor to finish off however, I am certain that the experience gained at this tournament will be invaluable as they now know where they are at and what is required of them for the next Junior Worlds.

The women's section was an all Aussie final, Gold vs Green with Green coming out victorious. David Fortin did us proud by officiating on 1st for that final.



Woman's Final's Crew

Chris, Sarah, Dave



Dave and Leanne



Junior Girls relaxing

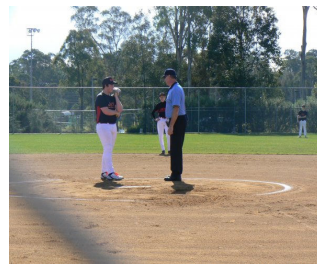
In the Men's section there were two teams from New Zealand – one of them a club team from Auckland, two Australian Squad teams and a team from each representing state ACT, NSW and Adelaide.

These guys played and hit hard not giving an inch, they were also pretty knowledgeable with the rules too. All games were intense and full of action. Illegal pitches were an issue in the men's section pretty much right up to the last day. During the clinic this topic was touched on and that we needed to manage it then act if it continued.

Well same problem there as we have here, consistency, some Blues are stronger than other's, that's fine but the only way to gain that consistency is being confident and having that knowledge but also knowing you have that support behind you and also coaches coached to the limits or until they had a run scored against them.



ACT Pitcher



Nice colour laces but...

The weather was rather cool during the day but cold at night. Like the women's games the men's were exciting as well. A lot of "Bang Bang" play's. The Kiwi Team's all did well in particular NZ ISA (B) Team whom went through to the final but Loss 5-7 to NSW. There is some really exciting talent coming through, which I am sure they will grace us with there presence in the next few seasons to come.



Men' Final Crew



National Anthem's



Score Board

Haydon, Gavin, Sharon



"Hit da Ball"



NZ ISA Haka in Final

All in all, this was an experience that will remain with me for years to come. I would recommend this tournament and urge anyone from Level 3-6 to take hold of this opportunity and go for it. Yes there is a cost factor but it is worth every cent. The experience gained on and off the diamond, friendships made within the Umpiring Fraternity just can't beat it.

I would liken this experience to:

"Before one walks, they must first learn to crawl"

I now want to run!

I would like to congratulate and thank All the Kiwi Teams, Players and Management for their part in our hikoi (journey). You are awesome, thank you for allowing us to be part of that Kiwi Whanaungatanga. I wish you all the best in your endeavours.

David Fortin and Chris Reve (Team Kiwi) excellent gents, awesome to work with you, I am sure we will do it again.

To my new found Aussie Colleagues, a huge thank you. You all helped make this a special occasion. It is just as well the Kiwi invented "**Facebook.com**"

It is amazing that through this game we all come to love the friendships and memories we have made along the way by far out weights any negativity associated with Umpiring.

In closing I wish to share a Maori Proverb that pretty much sum's up our Umpiring Fraternity for me.

He aha te mea nui (What is the most important thing of all)

He tangata he tangata (It is man.....Its man)



The Aussie Ragga Muffin