



***Oceania World Cup Qualifier 2023 – U18 Women & Senior Men
Tony Solaita Field – Pago Pago – American Samoa
November 5th – 8th & November 10th – 12th 2023***



- ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS***
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I have great pleasure in presenting a report on behalf of myself and Andy McManus for our appointment to the above event held in American Samoa – November 2023.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

- Softball New Zealand – Especially Eugene Gilbert
- North Harbour Softball
- The National Umpire Staff
- Wiremu Tamaki – TCU
- Our employers, the ANZ Bank and Air New Zealand
- Dynasty Sports for the travel shirts
- Brooke Penfold – Tournament Director
- Kirsty Andrews – Tournament Statistician
- Louis Soliata – Tournament Liason
- The players and fans who attended the tournament

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

The travel arrangements for this tournament were made via SNZ. It entailed a flight from Auckland to Apia with an overnight stay at the Transit Motel near the airport. The Transit Motel was adequate but for a longer stay would not have been suitable. We were scheduled to fly to Pago Pago the next morning at 11:00 am. It was only by chance that I referred to the booking online and discovered the flight had been changed to 14:00 pm. We had no notification. It was checked and confirmed as being the later time. Apparently, the plane that we were scheduled to fly on had some technical issues that resulted in it being “retired” from the fleet. Unfortunately, our transport back to the airport could not be changed meaning a long wait at Apia airport for the flight to American Samoa. Similar issues occurred on the return trip from Pago Pago to Apia. We were met by Louis at Pago Pago airport and transported to our accommodation.

ACCOMMODATION, LAUNDRY & TRANSPORT

Our accommodation was at The Hanger, a facility that had been set up at the airport during COVID-19 as a quarantine facility. The rooms were large and had one guest per room. The softball officials were the only guests. The facility suited our needs. Each room was equipped with a fridge and microwave as well as coffee and tea-making facilities. It had a great laundry room, although we did have to negotiate it being left open after returning from games at night. The staff were friendly and willing to assist where they could. Rooms were not serviced during our stay. The local organising committee had provided us with a seven-seater vehicle for our use at any time. Having that convenience was great. The facility is definitely recommended should American Samoa host other events.

PARKS & FACILITIES

Tony Soliata Field was a very short drive from the accommodation. In fact, it was probably just a ten-minute walk but, given the temperatures, that did not happen often. The field is a converted baseball stadium with temporary outfield fences and dugouts. Fences along the dead-ball lines and dugouts were only provided at the request of Brooke and Wu the day before the tournament but the job did get done efficiently. There were excellent lights for night games. Some of the infield surface was a little rough and the ground crew were required to scrape and roll the surface regularly. The ground crew worked very hard to ensure the standard was suitable and, in the end, it was up to an acceptable standard for the level of competition.

The umpire room was a good size for the crew and was air-conditioned. Tables and chairs were provided as were some cots for relaxation which proved necessary. With a bit of #8 wire mentality, the room was sorted and on the second day, we were also provided with a portable hanger for our uniforms. Water and Gatorade were provided. The food was a bit hit-and-miss. It was delivered occasionally but at times that did not suit. Fruit platters were also provided, sometimes.

Overall the room was entirely suited to the small umpire crew.

THE UMPIRE CREW

There were four WBSC umpires appointed to the tournament plus one supervisor. Additionally, we were assisted by a local umpire, although he was not WBSC certified and needed considerable assistance with rotations etc.

Umpire-in-Chief – Wiremu Tamaki (NZ)

Mark Porteous – (NZ), Andy McManus – (NZ), Trevor Murphy – (AUS), James English – (AUS) and Dave Lam Sam – (AS).

Given the size of the crew, initially, three umpire mechanics were utilised. When we were able we used four umpire crews. An illness in the crew meant additional work was required. Ultimately we got there but my recommendation would be for a tournament of this size five WBSC umpires should have been appointed. The umpire workload in very hot conditions was immense. There were fifteen games officiated. TM 14 games, MP 13 games, AM 12 games, JE 11 games and DLS 3 games. The camaraderie in the crew was fantastic and we were led well by Wu and Brooke.

BRIEF OVERVIEW

To be fair the American Samoan teams both U18 girls and Senior Men were not up to the standard of this competition with most of the games played by them resulting in run-ahead rules. The U18 women played one game against NZ very well and ended in a close loss. They were generally more competitive. The men however could not foot it with the NZ or Australian teams. It was great to see that all of the teams assisted their AS counterparts with coaching sessions. The teams from American Samoa will benefit from having the tournament

held in their yard. The crowds were disappointing but I understand that the viewership of the live streams was good. The streaming of the games was of a good standard. The relationship between the umpires and players was also very good.

SUMMARY

I think it was always going to be difficult for the American Samoans to compete with the teams from Australia and New Zealand. However, the effort that was put into holding the event was rewarded with a very successful tournament. It was unfortunate that the last day of the women's competition was rained out although it would not have affected the final outcome with NZ winning, Australia taking Silver and American Samoa Bronze. In the Men's competition, Australia took Gold, NZ Silver and American Samoa Bronze. Brooke was able to work with the local organising committee to make adjustments to the scheduled times and also implemented heat protocols during the last two days of competition when temperatures soared. The overall standard of the fields, transport, accommodation etc. was good. The provision of food was a major shortcoming. It became more of a problem when games finished late and the only food options became McDonald's or Carl's Jr. Having our own vehicle was fantastic and gave us plenty of flexibility and also allowed us to do some sightseeing during the break between the two competitions. The difficulty of transport between the islands on small planes also made things a little tricky as teams needed to be split up into groups of eight to fly from and to Samoa. In fact, initially, the three NZ umpires were on differing flights but a late change meant we all flew together. Overall I believe this was a successful event and one that was very enjoyable for us all.

Ngā mihi nui.

Mark Porteous & Andy McManus

PHOTOS

