

Sunday 4 October 2009

What a long day. The day started while the moon was still out: at 3am. The team awoke early to catch our flight at Christchurch International, at 5:30am. The gear was packed into the trailers, rooms were checked, and the team was off to Australia.

We arrived into Sydney's Kingsford Airport at 7am. Expecting sun and heat, we were shocked to be greeted with the opposite- cold and wet weather. The situation was worsened when we checked into our connecting flight to Canberra, to find out that our flight had been cancelled. We therefore had 6 hours to kill in Sydney. Elaine Clarke, the NZU16 manager, organized us to check our bags into the later flight at 3:30pm, and take the team into the city centre for lunch and a bit of sightseeing.

The Sydney transport system was very organized, as it took us 20 minutes to take the train into the Sydney Circular Quay Station. The kids, many of whom have never been to Australia, were amazed to see the Sydney Opera House and the Harbour Bridge. Many photos were taken. We walked to The Rocks area, for lunch and further sightseeing. Unfortunately, the weather was wet and cold, but that did not dampen the spirits of the Kiwis. Even an Australian celebrity was sighted- Wallaby rugby legend David Campese was seen in his sporting goods store! Once we left The Rocks, we walked to the Opera House for the traditional team photos. By the time 2:30pm rolled around, we boarded the trains back to the Sydney domestic terminal.

The flight to Canberra was quite eventful, with the George Coslett and Liam Dallimore daring 13-year-old Frazer Ellis to ask Bianca, the air hostess, for her phone number. She quickly realized this was a dare, and she cleverly played along. Also, Callum Jansson's birthday was announced over the plane announcement.

Once arriving into Canberra, the team was greeted at the airport by the ACT coaches, managers, and a few players. It was a nice greeting, and it displayed a very welcoming atmosphere. The NZ players spoke to the ACT players in a very friendly and courteous manner. It was very assuring to see.

We promptly organized our vans and trailers, and drove 15km to the hotel. It was getting late, so we began to organize dinner. We went to a local Australian Rules Football Club, and they provided a delicious meal. By now, we had been awake and commuting for 21 hours- we were all very tired. We returned to the hotel, and the lights were out almost immediately.

Reported by Jonathan Albright
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