

Wednesday 7 October 2009

The day once again began with a hearty full-cooked breakfast delivered to everyone's rooms at around 8am. Unfortunately the weather did not match the team's jovial mood, with thunderstorms and constant rain continuing from the previous day. To make matters worse, a freezing south-easterly was blowing across the city, resulting in a chilly 2 degrees Celsius. Not the type of weather we were expecting!

Once again an NHL game featured on the Fox Sports channel, this time between the Washington Capitals and Philadelphia Flyers. The kids were excited to see the amazing skills and speed of Alexander Ovechkin of the Capitals, while I was more interested to see Chris Pronger, a huge defenseman who had been traded to the Flyers, who had been traded from the Anaheim Ducks over the summer. The team was able to watch the first period before the team loaded the vans around 11am headed for central Canberra.

We met with the ACT players and officials in a park not far from Parliament House for a barbeque. Unfortunately, the weather continued its rotten ways, however this did not dampen the mood of the team, who mingled with the Ozzies and enjoyed a delicious lunch. The hospitality offered by the people of Canberra has been second-to-none, and the NZ players and management have felt really welcome during the entire stay.

On the way back to the motel the team made a quick stop-off at the Australian Mint, where the country's coins are produced. The boys enjoyed reading about the history of coins throughout the world, and even got to see the coin-making process up close. Some of the boys even purchased coin collection kits, with Mason Brookes managing to track down a majority of the coins he needed for his collection thanks to the other boys.

Once back at the hotel, Jonathan and I had meetings with the team's three lines and goalies, to stress where they can improve their performance in the second game of the tour. The main focus was concentrating on our individual roles, and to play much smarter, particularly in our own defensive end.

The boys headed off to the game later that afternoon. You could sense that the team was much more relaxed on the way to the rink and during the off-ice warm up; the nerves from the previous day had seemed to evaporate.

The boys had a much better start to this game, controlling the tempo throughout the entire first period. Despite persistent pressure on the opposition goalie, it took until the 10th minute for Max Macharg to open the scoring for NZ on a brilliant individual effort driving to the net. Goals then came in quick succession for the team. Shaun Harrison, Liam Dallimore and Fraser Ellis all slotted their first goals in a New Zealand uniform, and when Harrison scored his second late in the period, the score finished 5-0 to NZ after the first 20 minutes.

The second period was much the same as the first, with the team playing a solid defensive game with good back checking and communication in the defensive zone. The

opposition also tightened up their defence, resulting in only one goal to the team in black. Kevin Jagau finished off a nifty pass across the slot from Jaxson Lane, with Max Macharg also picking up an assist in what proved to be a strong game for the rookie from Queenstown.

The third period proved quite a disappointment. The boys pulled their foot off the accelerator, and despite some solid saves from NZ goaltender Hamish Gouldstone, allowed ACT back into the game with 2 quick goals. Shaun Harrison capped off a memorable night by slotting his 3rd goal to gain the hat trick late in the period. The score of 7-2 was a fair reflection of New Zealand's domination throughout the game. The coaches were fairly pleased with the team's overall effort over the 2 games in Canberra, however are still seeking

The boys then headed to the Lions football club, the same place that they had eaten on Monday night. Once again the food and service was top notch. An early night was had by all, in anticipation of our early wake up call in order to make our flight to Adelaide the next morning.

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