

Thursday 8 October

We were on the move again today, this time to fly to Adelaide via Melbourne. We left the Leagues Hotel in Queanbeyan at 5:30am and made our way to the airport. The sun hadn't risen yet, and there was hardly any traffic on the roads. The vans were collected at the domestic terminal, and we were off on a Pacific Blue flight to Melbourne. The sun rose while we were in the air.

After a quick 45 minute flight to Melbourne and 30 minute stopover, we were on the move again to Adelaide. This leg of the journey was another 45 minutes. From above, we could see the hilly landscape of Victoria change to flatlands and beaches once we entered South Australia.

Once arrived at the Adelaide International Airport, we were greeted by the former Ice Hockey Australia Senior Men's captain, Glen Foll. Glen also serves as the South Australia Ice Hockey president. We welcomed us to Adelaide, and explained to us where the hotel, rink, and food shops were located. We soon made our way to the Marion suburb, where we were to stay for the trip.

The Marion district is a very commercial area, with shops lining the streets and homes tucked away behind. The Comfort Inn we were staying at seemed to be a relic of the past, with brown brick and very outdated furniture and room dressings. The layout however, was very ideal for our needs. We were provided rooms along one row of the hotel, with an Astroturf tennis court facing us.

Once we got settled into our rooms, we made our way to the Marion Westfield Mall for lunch and some shopping. Since we had a game later in the day, the boys were given instructions to carry a water bottle with them in the mall, and it would cost 50 push-ups if they were caught without it, or if it was empty. With this threat, they stayed well hydrated.

Before long, it was gametime. We made our way back to the hotel, changed into our number ones, and headed to the rink. We arrived to yet another relic of the 1970's- the rink was slightly shabby with a lot of vacant, open spaces, I've since been told that there used to be a small sloping skifield, located above the ice surface itself. Furthermore, the rink surface was elevated off the ground, with a parking lot underneath. The ceiling of the parking lot was actually sweating beads of condensation onto the cars below, and onto the players doing their off-ice warm-up!

The game began at 6pm sharp. The teams lined up on their blue lines, and did a fierce Haka. It was unchallenged by the South Australians. The game itself was a see-saw battle, with each team exchanging goals back and forth. Although the South Australians were not as skilled individually as the Kiwis, they played a very good, structured game. They all collapsed down low in their zone, and were very committed to blocking shots. They also had an outstanding young goaltender who was very mobile, and moved with good agility around his crease. It would be tough to score against him.

New Zealand played a fast paced, flowing game with which the South Australians could not keep up with. Through this flow, we managed 4 goals thanks to the creativity of Jaxson Lane and Kevin Jagau, sniping shots of Frazer Ellis, and strong goaltending of Csaba Kersco-Magos. George Coslett, Reuben Burgess and Tayler Kennedy all had strong games on defence. Max Macharg, Callum Burns and Liam Dallimore exposed the South Australian defences with their speed. And George Scoot and Callum Jansson provided a good physical element in the corners and in front of the net. With 2 minutes left in the game and a 4-2 scoreline, South Australia pulled their goalie and managed to score with 30 seconds left. It was a tight final moments, but New Zealand prevailed with a 4-3 victory.

The mood in the New Zealand dressingroom following the game was more of relief than jubilation. We knew that we had snuck away with the victory, and that South Australia would be stronger tomorrow. We had to respond in turn, and tighten up our defence and marking in our own zone.

Night fell quickly, and the players went to sleep thinking of what they had to do in the next game.

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