

Daily Diary of our trip to the Olympics – Greece 2004

Thursday 12th August 2004

After Nathan was named in the Olympic squad in early 2004, we decided if he made the team of 17 to go to Athens we would like to be there to see him play in Kookaburra's team. So we followed up preliminary arrangements and left Brisbane International Airport on Thursday 12 August on Qantas Airways. Trained it from Robina to Brisbane due to leave 2.15 pm with a seven hour trip to Singapore and meeting up with friends and other parents to leave for Bahrain. Security very obvious and will be another long trip.

Friday 13th August 2004

Will be leaving Singapore at 5 o'clock. Very long night we were over 10 hours at the airport. Finally at Bahrain after 6 1/2 hours. Not much of a wait for final flight to Athens. It is only a 4 hour flight. People everywhere at Athens arrivals area. Being met by our tour organiser – fairly long wait for luggage. Now we have to find the bus. Don't know which way or where to go to get the bus. Just follow the leader! Everyone has 1 big case and small hand luggage and water bottle – what a sight! 30 people trying to handle luggage and stay together so no one gets lost! Bus ordinary service so many people all ready going to "Plaka" wherever that is! We must of worried a lot of bushies trying to get on this bus with all the luggage. We were only allowed a couple of stops and some locals wanted to get off the bus. What an exercise that was! Still only Friday 13th even though we have been travelling (Thursday and Friday) long drive to our bus stop then a 10 minute walk to hotel. Walking to our hotel round and round, up hills, narrow walkways so had to walk single file. We must of looked like hobos, no shower for two days, tired and all this luggage! Took us 20 minutes – we were all tired but finally there.

Catching up with friends

Meeting new parents of players

Hotel Adam – fully booked by players, parents and a few hockey supporters

2-euro cup of tea or coffee, or a bottle of water.

Good omen in our room – lovely picture print flowers in vase by "Vincent" our son in law Sue De Young's husband of all rooms to be given. Only picture in two floors of rooms and we are in it.

Saturday 14th August 2004

Walked around the area. Light over here early and nice eating places. All cafes in the streets, shops, churches, newsagents, ice-cream vendors all only 5 minutes walk. Very handy to everything. Train and bus only 10 minutes away, easy to get lost, streets all look the same.

1st breakfast at 8.15 am

Merv and Bruce, going to pick up tickets

Very warm at 11.30 am

Aussie girls – 1st game tonight. Leaving at 3.30 pm. Have to find out where we are going. Up and down the escalators – train ok but at bus pick-up could see no. of buses but couldn't see how to get there. Please hope we have extra time.

Finally at hockey venue. Security everywhere. Hurt arm when bus stopped and missed the step and fell. Bruised arm and sat in covered area for an hour. Looks fair walk to hockey gate. Two other sports held in this area.

2 Hockey Fields main stadium and 2nd field 5 pm. Still very hot, sun still up very high in the sky. Looks like our expensive seats are opposite to main seating area and facing sun. All the time main stand very high!! Girls game (Germany v Aust) disappointing. Second game 8 o'clock, be late night (Argentina v Spain) found station closer to hotel arrived home at 11 pm late to eat.

Sunday 15th August 2004

Men's first game, early morning 8.30 am start. All transport free. Lost sticks from Aussie flag today so can just hold limp flag now! Talk about funny rules for security! Boys look sharp. Half time Aust 2, NZ 0. Nat good shot, hit goalies helmet, Jamie another goal. 3 – 1 to Australia as NZ just scored. Jamie hat trick now 4 – 1 Aust. Good result spent 30 minutes with Nathan after game.

2nd Game (Argentina v Spain) Now getting very warm in sun. Players to come over early evening. No girls as they play tomorrow morning again. Big day today all really tired.

Monday 16th August 2004

Our hotel is in a very popular area. The famous Acropolis is at our back door. You can see it from every angle. Found good fruit shop yesterday. Only 8 of us this morning on trip to hockey. Girls parents went early to see the girls before the game. Girls a little better this game. Defence holding up but need to do something up front. Suzie and Julie score. 2 – 0 to Aust and 3rd goal to Peta. Aust v RSA 3 – 0.

Butlers going to Olympic village this afternoon so coming on our train and bus. Walked all around Plaka today. Found more restaurants. Schuberts, Merv and I explored all around Plaka today. Talk about walk. Found big orthodox church being restored. Very interesting architecture in all these old buildings. Walked for two hours. Found our way back to the hotel. Had a rest to get ready for dinner tonight.

Tuesday 17th August 2004

Some of friends saw changing of guards last night. Very impressed so hope we see them before we leave. Early start again. Men playing 10.30 am this morning. More people here today. Seems more people everyday we come out here. Australia v Argentina today. Arg score first but Aust forwards came back Woody, Jamie, Eggy. All had shots. Argentina a bit rough (push and shove tactics) but Aust get 1. 1 – 1 then 2 – 1 to Argentina. Then good play and Jamie gets a touch and bingo, he scores. He is a clever striker. Now 2 all and we have a draw out of that game. Our corners weren't working either going to see boys before we go. Have appointment with photographer for story with Nathan and sure enough we made the papers back home. Got lots of messages from family back home in Australia next day. To have barbeque at night at our hotel for both teams. Most of them came. Really good to see everyone as tomorrow is a free day for both hockey teams. Seems so long since parents had a chance to sit down with their off spring. They were all back on way to Olympic Village early.

Wednesday 18th August 2004

Big outing today for us parents. Boat cruise – bus to docks. Not going on new Queen Mary which is berthed for two weeks. Very relaxed and interesting. Dinner included and lovely scenery. Water craft everywhere. It was most interesting, the house all the boat and to see how the people manage living on the islands. Entertainment on the cruise ship was superb and very enjoyable. Two sittings with your lunch being served in the huge dining room. Interesting shopping and lots of photos taken. Long day with bus tour on last island and visiting very ancient monastery and church being restored. The islands were Paros, Hydra and Aegina – the name of the cruise ship was M/V Anna Maru. Very weary people when we arrived back to our hotel at 7.45 pm that night.

Thursday 19th August 2004

Just as well men play late game tonight. Gives us all day to get over our cruise trip. All family from home have been in touch with us today. Nathan's photo and write up was in the papers. Leaving at 6 pm will see some of the 1st game in our session. Spain v Great Britain, 5 – 1 to Spain. We play India. Big crowd tonight. Our people are scattered everywhere as we all have seating arrangements. From one end to the other in blue seats/ We are the minority tonight as Indians everywhere. O it will be very noisy. India score first. Boys are certainly making us suffer but I 1 all at half time. 2 more goals to Aussie. 3 – 1 now. India in again. Noise is incredible. 3 all – have to try and pull this one out of the hat. 3 minutes left on the clock and yes ball in scoring position and Michael Brennan scores 4 – 3 to Aust. We certainly needed that. Boys on field for long time and the lights are slowly going out. Might not get to see the boys but they came over to our side. Security and Volunteers trying to get us out of the venue. All the Brits travelled with us on bus home. They stayed back to support Aust v India. Very noisy!!!

Friday 20th August 2004

Early start again. Talk about on the go with games everyday!!! Girls 8.30 am today so breakfast at 6.15 am. Aust v Korea still a bit flat at beginning of game. 1 all at half time. Much better in second half. But still can't put the ball in net. Some very disappointed players out. Big hole when Angie is off field. Rachel saves a lot of shots final score 2 all again. Not enough attack will find it hard to climb back up now. But all the parents and the boys parents are still hoping for the girls to make it. Only seeing 15 mins of NZ v Arg game as Schuberts and Merv and I are going to Olympic Village only day available. Takes us two hours to get there. What an eye opener! Will only touch on main events.

Security very heavy. Long que to even get in. Mid-day very hot. Can see the boys. They are in air conditioned waiting room waving to us. We are like crease spots. Finally (but have to surrender our passports – that's a worry!). Nathan takes us to media area and shops and then to dining hall. Talk about important people and everyone is so friendly. Took 3 shots of camera to fit in all of dining hall. Very tall volleyballers and basketballers all athletes riding around on classy push bikes. Hockey way way up in distance. Long walk, saw half of players. Their unit, room and new, 4 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms. Lounge, dining very clean. Stayed for 3 hours, then long walk back. Get into line to get our passports back. Have to wait for bus now. All the

flags and different nationalities it was very impressive. Now 3.30 pm must start back for Athens. Saw Ray Dorsett on way out and few of Dutch players – they are a friendly lot off the field. Eggy ran into NZ player Shaw, gosh he is a big fella. Waited 10 minutes no sign of bus, someone came up and said just stay where you are and hail bus when it comes. So we are on the right side of the road. Now 4.30 pm so will be long day by time we reach hotel. 7 o'clock when we arrive, others going out to dinner but we are so tired. Have some nice fruit, cup of tea and then to bed.

Saturday 21 August 2004

Men's game tonight at 6 pm. So will take it easy today. Still tired from all our walking. 1st game on second pitch against South Africa. Then Pakistan v Spain in last game. Having lunch and dinner in one. Latte this afternoon back to 1st restaurant it seems the best tried. Coke with slice lemon very good thirst quencher. Well be crowd at hockey tonight so will leave about 3.45 more travelling on train and bus. Can't move for Paki's at entrance waiting tickets apparently they got wrong ones and can't see their game now. Checking all tickets and seat numbers. Tonight boys look different in white and green tonight as SA in green and gold. Mark Hickman in net tonight so that is good he is playing. 10 minutes into game and no – SA score. 1 down again then Travis scores. 1 all oh my hat, Eggy just scored his first Olympic goal. We are on the second pitch and we can't see the replay!!!! But our trip has been rewarded by seeing this goal. Now 2 – 1 to Australia. Then SA scores again 2 all at half time. 3 yellow cards – 2 to SA and 1 to Matthew so it is getting a bit rough. Troy just scored now. 3 – 2 to Australia Boys allowed to come over to our stand and see next game Pakis v Spain. Spanish supporters in front of us noise is tremendous – Spain 1 goal up – they are very fast up front. Pakis seem to be in shock mode as 2 nil to Spain. 1 goal up – they are very fast up front. Pakis seem to be in shock mode as 2 nil to Spain at half time. Pakis can't even convert penalty corners. Spain defence is terrific. Now 3 – nil to Spain 10 minutes to go and pakis supporters leaving – what a thing to do because your team is being beaten. Spain scored again. 4 – 0 to Spain. What a white wash! Long walk to bus from pitch 2 and light already out. So we got a ride on motorised vehicle tonight. Past baseball pitch to bus back at hotel at 10.45 pm. Long day again.

Sunday 22nd August 2004

Up later today. Breakfast at corner café- bacon and eggs, thought we were back at home. Girls game tonight 8 o'clock. Will have a good rest, not many around today, everyone having a quiet day. Must have been a late night for them all. Will leave at 5 o'clock or venue. Girls seem more settled tonight. But still no score. Dutch women are big, tall and solid and doing a lot of pushing. 0 – 0 at half time lots of supporters for aussie girls. Brits here and people every where. Dutch score 1st goal. Looks like this is it. Need win. 1 nil. Girls not even in top four. Must be very hard for Aussie girls – will have to get classification tickets now very late home. 11.30 pm and we left straight after the game. Girls parents went to see players to try and console them. Some are going out for dinner but too late for us.

Monday 23rd August 2004

Got free time all day as men's game at 8.30 tonight. Merv and I going to tent city to shop. Botanical gardens and meet up with Butlers and Smiths too. Back to hotel at 1.30 pm will have meal at 2.30 or 3 pm. Girls parents coming out for NED v AUST game – in red seat tonight but bars in way in front row so sitting in 2nd row. So we can see better – Korea v Germany. 2 all so Germany in top four. Finished 2nd, Spain 1st. 'A' pool – lots people here for NED v Aust game. Very hot all day so it is good that men playing tonight stayed on main grandstand for ½ hour still very hot. Will make our way to seat at full time of first game. With NED v Aust venue is packed Aust Can't get started as Dutch slowing down game to suit there play. Jamie is marked heavily and our corners still not scoring goals. Eggy on Denoyer and staying with him – then NED have pc – lovely flick so 1 nil to NED. Aust using all there players still very hot and humidity very high. Good work in circle and Travis scores now 1 all. Then Dutch go to 2 – 1, just hope they can do something. In last 25 minutes. Aust have all there players but can't put ball in net. Another chance but things just not going Aust way. Only minutes to go and NED 2 pc – 2 goals. Finished up NED 2 Aust 1 but we are in the top four so just have to click with the semis and we are still getting good field goals. Saw boys after game. People still everywhere, getting very late now. So will be 11.30 by the time get back to the hotel. Celebrating tonight (NED 1, AUST 2, SPAIN 3, GERMANY 4)

Tuesday 24 August 2004

Girls have a classification game today so will have a free day (thank goodness). Getting too old for all these late nights. Georges us were last down for breakfast. Did we get ribbed! Finished some shopping at our shops 2 minutes away. Of course we will have a rest this afternoon. Girls have win against Japan so will play off for 5th and 6th with NZ on Thursday 26th so have to buy tickets now for that game as we all had semi final tickets. Had chance to have time with De Youngs tonight as few are all going out to dinner in main town area. Tomorrow will be big night at men's semi-finals but will have all day to ourselves again to finish up some tourist commitments.

Wednesday 25 August 2004

Up nice and early back to tent city. Long walk up hill on main road. Were able to get interesting mementos of Greece and Olympic merchandise. Now to get to Syntagma Square where you see the changing of the guard. Must be over 2 kms – what an interesting spectacle all the pomp and ceremony on older times and traditions. Carry real guns too – were fortunate to have our photo take beside on of the guards met up other parents (didn't know they were going to be there) Big group leaving tonight on our way to semi – finals that is. First of 2 big games. Session starts at 6.30 pm. NED v GER – so many people – plenty of supporters on train and bus so could be a late night again. Germany and The Netherlands finish up at 3 – 2 to Netherlands. Germany defence worked overtime but Dutch had just that extra so are now ready for finals day. All Dutch supporters staying to see result of our game. Boys look very fit and ready to go and now warming up. Very noisy in all the stands. As Spain and Aust warm up. These Spanish players start off very fast so boys will need to be ready. Nathan in run on tonight. Usually comes on after 15 minutes. Hope he has a good game. What a start – Troy 1, Matthew 1 and Mike 1. Australia 3 – Spain 1 at half time. What a change from previous starts. Everyone doing there jobs. Team really are playing all over Spain. 3 more goals to Australia. Spain put 2 more in in second half too so finished up 6 – 3 to Australia. Boys are elated and not in a hurry to get off field. Will make way over to try and see the boys. One more time before finals day – starting to feel it has all been worth it. Now they are going to play off for a gold medal!!! Getting calls from home. Very early morning over there. All had radios going to keep up with results, getting very emotional, parents of both players we were all out at venue tonight getting late, no sign of the boys yet and security are starting to put out lights and trying to move us from venue. But we are staying have seen so many hockey people here tonight just can't believe we are on the verge of making history. Just spoken to Harry Gardner from Toowoomba and he is happy! Just said all that travelling up the range has paid off. Must wait to shake hands with boy tonight. We had a lovely trip back to hotel singing songs on train and bus and then in middle of road at Plaka shopping area. I think the locals couldn't believe it. We only won the semi-final but we are just getting ready for Finals Day!!! About 30 happy Aussies – very late. Mobiles still being used to get messages from different people. In room now 12.40 am!!!!

Thursday 26th August 2004

Didn't come down to breakfast till 8 am some going to other events this morning as girls play at 11 am for 5th and 6th. All boys parents going to support the girls today. Too Georges and us have to get tickets at the gate! Of course Elna and George and myself, Geoff like Xmas bells at Security as she has a knee replacement too. But I have two! Everyone stops and look when it happens. Out tickets are for back of nets but not very many here for 1st session so will use blue seats. Girls seem pleased to see all the supporters here for their last game. Hope, toni kronk gets on the field today. Girls have 2 goals up so looking a lot better. Still turning ball over too much! Looks good now. 3 nil to Aussie so are covered now for the Champions Trophy. As they have to win and finish 5th here. What a relief, parents staying to catch up with girls. We have to get back to hotel to all come out for medals tonight. Toni finally our on field. Only 4 minutes to go. Will be having combined lunch to celebrate – fruit. Buns and hot chicken from other part of Athens. Way over where hockey venue and us oldies know how to party. What a feast, supporters, parents of the girls and boys, hotel owners were very helpful – didn't finish until time to get ready to go out for medal night for girls. Argentina v China. Bronze to Argentina. Big Game Dutch very strong and use there bodies a lot. Germany defence holding very well. Yellow card to Dutch so Germans take advantage and score first. Germany has 2nd goal. Dutch are shell shocked! Need score now 2 – 1 to Germany. Dutch players can't believe it. Germany have gold. Netherlands silver and Argentina Bronze. Very late. 11.30 pm when arrived back at hotel. I think we will sleep for a week when this is over. Hockey finishes – Girls seem happier today after their final game – glad we were there for them.

Friday 27th August 2004

Well today is the big day. All the green and gold coming out now and Aussie flags. Two couples from the hotel leave today for extra days in Europe so now only hockey people there. Paul (our travel supervisor) has organized tickets for our hotel host and owner to come and see the game with us. They were very excited only venue they have been to. Having good lunch to last us for the night session. Leaving about 4.30 for hockey all

transport very crowded. All team supporters everywhere for last game. It is a who's who of celebrities out here tonight but I think our group of parents are the most excited and focused for our boys to do well. Bring home the bacon as the saying goes. Bronze game at 6 pm and then our game at 8.30 pm and medal presentation around 11 o'clock tonight. Red seat stand 1 side Dutch 1 side Aust. Noise is tremendous. You have to be here to experience the atmosphere. Camera's, videos, flags and so colourful. Girls teams all out here now too. Ready for Pain v Germany to start. Spain very fast but Germany defence holding them out. Even game at half time but next half should give us a winner. No such luck. Full time and 2 all draw so extra time – both teams feeling heat and pressure. Germany p/c in the first 7 ½ minutes successful. Germany have bronze medal.

Time to stand up and stretch our legs. Can't move very much not enough room. Sitting in aisles up stairways anywhere you can find a spot.

Boys are warming up now. Our hopes and prayers are with them now. Channel 7 video and reporters getting aussie supporters all fired up. Talk about excitement, oh what a sight! As teams come on to field seven broadcast hoping to go to Australia for News session on Saturday. What a sensational feeling.

When NED scored first goal, things and drinks went up in the air everywhere – both teams doing there best still very hot conditions. Good team work from Aussies in first half but no goal to Aus in first half. But Aussies still running strong. 1 to Netherlands at half-time. But next half will be the deciding result. Aussies attacking now and are creating lots of chances. Butts off in first half injured. But back on 2nd half now with a couple of stitches in head. Dutch seem to be slowing down.

Our boys are getting on top of things, good passes and yes Travis has put the ball in the net, all squared up. Now everyone is jumping up and down singing. The noise is so loud just saw replay on big screen oh! This is so good!

Full time and 1 goal each. Dutch don't look confident but our boys are rearing to go.

Extra time now and "golden goal" all very nervous up her in the red stands. Now changing ends, 2nd 7 ½ minutes about to start. Wham! Good passage of play and yet p/c to Australia. Could this be it? Ball comes out from Eggy stopped and pass to Jamie, can't see, everyone standing up in front of us but know by the noise that it is in.

You should see the players – the Dutch just sitting on field and their goalie is distraught. Bench players on field as ball hits back board, excitement and tears and hugs everywhere. What a sensational finish.

We have done it – how will we be able to wait for another hour before we can be with our boys. Phones going off everywhere and people just very emotional. We are so proud of our Kookaburras. The media people were just wonderful to all the Aussie Families.

This has been one of the most important times in our lives to be here and see Nathan and his team win a gold medal for hockey. We are so proud of our Kookaburras to be Australian's first Hockey Gold Medal in history. Our dreams have all been fulfilled. It has been a wonderful experience and we are grateful to our wonderful family back home to have been able to be here.

During the next four days we celebrated and partied and spent time with our victorious hockey players and all our new hockey families and left for home on the 31st of August arriving back in Brisbane on Thursday morning at 6.15 am. Exhausted but very proud, Merv and I feel most treasured moments to us when the team were standing on the victory dais and receiving their medals and raising there arms together to wards the sky and then seeing the Australian flag on the middle flag pole. We will remember that always.

It was the most memorable three weeks.

Rae and Merv Edwards
Athens Olympic Journey 2004