

Reflective Blog

Mann Cup Diaries: Wrapping Up

September 2015

Well, here I am back home, and reflecting on the past week in Victoria, B.C., at the Mann Cup. What an experience. The Victoria Shamrocks reclaimed the Mann Cup for the WLA, the first time since 2005. They did it in probably the hardest fought, closest series there has ever been. My team lost, and that still stings and will for a while, but I made a lot of good memories along the way, and really felt like an integral part of the team. Here are my final thoughts about the trip and the series.

The Trip

- Internet in Victoria is sketchy at best, anywhere you go (at least anywhere I went).
- Why is goat cheese so popular on the island? It was literally on every restaurant's menu.
- It was sad to see the number of homeless people in Victoria. Even when I visit Toronto I never see as many as I did on this trip.
- The number of hotels and motels in Victoria has to be the highest per capita in the country. Every few feet downtown was another! It was almost mind-boggling.
- Water taxis are just awesome.
- Airplanes are a scientific marvel. The fact that they weigh a bazillion pounds and can stay in the sky is mind-blowing. Same with boats, especially ones like the B.C. Ferries that have room for up to 410 cars on board and offer buffet meals and video arcades!
- Granted, I haven't traveled to many places, but Victoria is the most beautiful city I've ever seen. The downtown is a vibrant place with so many different types of people (yes, a lot of tourists), great restaurants, positive street art, and an inner harbour that is the centrepiece of the city. Even the suburbs down the highway—Langford, Colwood, Goldstream, etc.—have their own unique identities but blend into a great metropolis of function and beauty.
- Whale watching before game six was an incredible experience. There were so many different companies to choose from, but we went with Five Star Whale Watching. Their guides were energetic and really well informed. We saw several pods of transient orcas, although due to regulations we couldn't get too close. But, we also saw a humpback whale and got about 50 feet from it—it was majestic. I've loved humpback whales ever since seeing Star Trek IV as a child. We also saw bald eagles flying, and porpoises poking their heads out of the water. We went by some rocks jutting out of the water where hundreds of seals and sea lions were resting, man were they noisy and quite stinky! I had to hold my nose. It was just surreal being in another part of the world; it's so different from where I live.
- Feeding the harbour seals at Fisherman's Wharf is one of the best moments of my life. I've never had an opportunity to do anything like that before. Their cute little faces will stay with me forever.

The Lacrosse

- This was the second Mann Cup I've been a part of, although my role was a lot smaller in 2012 when I was still fairly new to the sport. I can't wait until we can host it next year and have that home floor advantage again.
- I fully believe that the Lakers did the best they could in this series, and that the series with Six Nations just wiped them out. Playing 13 games in 25 days is a lot, when usually they only play 1-3 games a week. Add in the stupid heat out in Ontario all summer bogging down rinks without air conditioning and you have the

potential for some really drained players. They are all incredible athletes, but even Curtis Dickson isn't really Superman.

- Speaking of Dickson, having him in Peterborough this year was fantastic. John Grant Jr., who had been the cornerstone of the franchise for years, did not come back this year, but in Dickson, we got someone even more capable than Grant at scoring ridiculous goals. It's up in the air right now, depending on work, whether Dickson will come back again next year, but the Lakers staff is dedicated to making sure that he does. Also, chances are high the Lakers will compete for the Mann Cup again, and I can't see him missing out on playing for the championship at home.
- As I said in another article, I do hope that in next year's championship, each game has one referee from each league working on the floor to avoid conflicts of interest. Also, none of the referees working should be alumni of either of the competing teams.
- Hats off to the defense from each team. I have never seen a more dedicated, reliable, physical, engaged defense as I did this series. It was almost magical to watch.
- You know how much this game means to everyone involved when you see the emotion that comes from both winning and losing. Rhys Duch and Dan Dawson holding their kids in the team photo put a smile even on my face. Of course, that was before I had to do interviews with the Lakers, in which I had to face a lot of tears (my own, and theirs)!

The Thank You's

- Thank you to ILWT for publishing all my stories about my trip and the Mann Cup! Covering a national championship was amazing. Hopefully you all enjoyed following my journey.
- Thank you to the Shamrocks and Lakers for always being cooperative with the press and answering all our questions. Victoria coach Bob Heyes especially is excellent with the media, and gives great interviews and doesn't use a lot of sports clichés, which I really appreciate.
- Thanks to the Hope family for taking me under their wing this week and making me feel included, and also for being some of the Lakers most enthusiastic supporters.
- To all the people we met in Victoria, at our hotels, restaurants, the Q Centre, and various tourist destinations—I know most of you work in the service industry and are used to being friendly to tourists, but you really made us all feel so welcome.
- Biggest thanks to Rosemary Rutledge and Ted Higgins for organizing our fan trip to Victoria! I can barely put into words what an amazing adventure we had. Also a shout-out to all the fans who came with us—the Lakers loved having your support out there.