

Minnesota 1993 Boys Chilling in the Desert

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Tomorrow we leave for Phoenix. Eight months ago, our team started our quest to Nationals. We wore Minnesota on our backs with pride, and brought the Minnesota cold with us and froze at Regionals. The victory settled in slowly, with months until Nationals. We could only dream of what it would be. Playing under lights? Fans cheering?

March 11, 2010

The rooster crowed early at 5:30 a.m. in the morning. I have never gotten out of bed so fast. As I dressed, the butterflies started entering my stomach. The drive to the airport felt short, and in minutes I was standing with my team. We were all smiles and excited facial expressions.

Once our whole team was there, our coaches stated the expectations. We were to be professional, to make everyone's day easier, and to keep places cleaner than we found them. We checked in, but security always finds something to search. Ben Cherry (midfielder) and Ivan Woyno (team manager) were stopped and had to be searched.

After security did their job, we headed to our gate, and waited for our plane. We were easy to pick out — all wearing khaki pants and our black Minnesota ODP warm-ups. We boarded the plane and were off to Phoenix, leaving the Minnesota cold behind. The flight seemed long and short, at the same time. Some did homework, or at least tried. Others slept or watched the movie the airline provided. No matter what we were doing, once the pilot said we were getting ready to land, we all looked out the windows to see the beautiful landscape.

We were all in awe when we landed. No one could believe we were already at Nationals. We got into our four minivans and headed to the hotel. Once we picked up our room keys, we rushed to our rooms. Each room had an amazing view of the mountains. Sightseeing was short — we had to get ready for practice. We all jammed back into the minivans and zoomed to the fields.

As we arrived, the vibrant green fields screamed. Our training went well, and we were prepared for our game. John Tudor (coach) helped out Alex Elvidge (keeper) and me with our goal kicks and drop kicks. He made very slight changes, but they made huge differences. When we got back to the hotel, we were able to soak in the warmth and the view. As the night rolled in, bedtime approached. All of us headed to our rooms and got ready for bed. Lights out. End of day one.



March 12, 2010

The hotel phone rang at 7:30 a.m.: wake-up call. Breakfast was at eight. Once we were done, we ran to our rooms to get ready for our game. We now realized we weren't just representing Minnesota, but all of Region II. As we started to gather in the lobby, the butterflies came back.

We headed out the vans and headed for the fields. Techno, '90s rock, pop, and hip-hop were rocking on our way to the fields. Once we saw the fields, we knew it was game time. The tension rose, and the adrenaline rushed. We walked confidently to the benches. Our coaches gave us last minute pointers, and made sure we understood everything. 1-2-3, Minnesota!

The whistle blew and the game started. It sure didn't end the way we wanted, but we kept our heads high. The drive back seemed longer, but when we arrived at the hotel, everybody gazed into the horizon and put their mind at ease.

After getting rid of our Minnesota pale tan and chatting with the other teams, we headed out to see a movie. It was time for a little team bonding. Laughs were backed up by smiles. Our morale increased. Hearts were lifted. We went to bed happy that night, ready to have a full day of relaxation tomorrow. Lights out. End of day two.

March 13, 2010

A full day of relaxation started early, with a mid-morning practice. We worked hard, drilling offensive and defensive tactics. Alex (keeper) and I ran drill after drill, making sure we were as confident as possible. John Tudor's (coach) distinct English accent was heard over Greg Holker's (coach) coaching-mode scream. We were all feeling good and refreshed.

Our training went so well, we didn't even want to leave. But when we arrived at the hotel, it was time to sit back and chill. From snow, rain, and mud to warm sun and majestic views. Later on, Tyler (midfielder) and I went to the clubhouse and hit a round of 100 golf balls. Golfing never felt better, hitting the balls into the mountain-filled horizon. John Tudor, Greg Holker, Ivan Woyno and Andy Coutts (team manager) all hit a round of balls as well.

We all took advantage of the warm sun and perfect weather. No one sat in their rooms, everyone was out on their balcony or down by the pool. We spent the whole day lounging around the hotel and getting to know other teams. Joking started to die out, laughter faded and the night took over. Lights out. End of day three.

March 14, 2010

Morning came quicker than expected with a 5:30 a.m. wakeup call. Yawns and groans were shared at breakfast. The sun was still down, but making its appearance. In the van on our way to the fields, we rebooted with some more up-tempo music. The wheels were rolling and the tunes rocking.

By the time we got to the fields and started warming up, the sun was blistering down. We gathered, and our coaches made last-second comments. 1-2-3, Minnesota!

Our starting 11 jogged on the field. The whistle blew and the game started. We came out hard—forward Andrew Rorick scored in the fifth minute. But the engine never took off; we didn't score again. Once again, the game didn't end the way we hoped. The last whistle blew, game over, fourth place.

As we waited to get our medals, we thought of all the things we could've done differently, but it was over. There was no going back. Greg Holker called us up to the stage, one by one. As I looked out at the parents, players and coaches, I reminded myself that it was amazing just to be here. It was incredible to be given such an opportunity. After getting our medals and taking pictures, I walked over to my mom. She always has a smile on for me. She gave me a hug and a kiss and said how proud she was of me. I said goodbye to my mom and got back into the van, and headed back to the hotel.

On the ride back, I started thinking about all the people that have helped me get to where I was. If it weren't for my mom, none of this could've happened. Next, Gretchen Kjorstad, she's been my goalie coach

from the beginning. She's banged me to the ground, but has picked me back up. I don't think I would've kept being a keeper, if it wasn't for her. My list kept going and going. It made me realize that everyone does have an impact on me in some way.

After we all showered and changed, we checked out of our rooms. We had a long waiting time, sitting in the hotel from 11:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. Time passed pretty fast after Tyler Dixon and I went out and sat by the pool. After we ate lunch, we realized we were behind schedule. So we rushed to the airport, dropped off our vans, and waited for the shuttle. Once we got to the terminal, and got through security, we all sat at our gate and relaxed. We boarded shortly after, and got situated on the plane.

I didn't want to leave. I knew that once I got home, I was going to be back in reality. The plane took off, though, and we were headed back to Minnesota. After awhile, Isaac Kannah (midfield) and I started talking about what we were going to do about next year. Both of us play on a U18 team, and need to find a club for next year. We both agreed that we wanted a team that travels, and a team with no politics. We both want next year to be our breakthrough year. As senior year is approaching, major decisions lay ahead of us. As our plane got closer and closer to home, I realized I had to wake up early to go to school in the morning. After that thought, I had to take a nap.

Our plane landed and our weekend was over. I grabbed my bags, shook my coaches' hands, said goodbye to my team and headed home. When I got home, all I could do was watch a movie and fall asleep. Lights out. End of day four. ODP Championships done.