

From: Janine Hanson

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Subject: The rest of the games

In our final race I just kept thinking "now we are going to pass them..." I kept seeing them in my peripheral and then we'd move on them and then they would go. It was a constant battle the whole way down the course. We kept chipping away at them and we just couldn't catch them. That was a tough way to end! The rest of Saturday was exciting racing with Canada's first medal! Sunday too was a great day with the 3 more rowing medals (2 bronze and a gold). It made me so proud to be able to watch all my teammates do so well.

Post racing, the games turned into a whirlwind of events. The morning we were to move into the new hotel closer to the Olympic Village, we got a call that there were 5 available beds in the village. I got one of them! It was such a neat experience. The rooms were separated with a common room and 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms in each suite. It was a nice set-up. The village had a little stream going through it. It was really pretty. For entertainment there was a gym, a movie room where you could watch a movie on your own couch and big screen tv, games room, video games, Internet, swimming pool, grocery store, memorabilia store...everything! There was even a house for the "Mayor of the village". What fun! The dining hall of course was a highlight. There were areas for Asian, Mediterranean, and International foods, salads, sandwich areas, fruit, cereal, the biggest drink cooler I have ever seen full of Coke products, and last but not least...McDonald's! There was often a line-up at McDonald's, especially at 5am.

I was able to spend some time with my family, although it was hard to do the "family vacation" thing while also trying to do the "Olympic" thing. I was up late and tired and then touring for the day. It was exhausting, but worth it! I was able to go and watch Women's Volleyball, Handball (which I'm not sure why isn't bigger here, it's so great to watch!), Diving, and Track twice. It was so much fun to see what all the other athletes put all their time and energy into and watch them perform their best! What an eye opening experience. I learned that I do not love watching diving from the side of the divers because every single time I would jump because I thought they were going to hit their head on the board and I'd miss the dive because I'd close my eyes.

I was lucky to be able to attend both the Opening and Closing ceremonies! What a show they put on. Wow. It was great to be a part of the closing and to see the flag being passed on. I will be there next time and watch it all again. There are, of course, lots of steps to take to get there, but I am confident that London is in my future.

I am often asked what my favourite part was...I would have to say that week 2 was the experience that I was looking for. Week 1, while we were competing was wonderful, but we were living in a hotel with other rowers and spending all of our time in the hotel or at the course which is all the same as every other rowing event. It wasn't quite the Olympics as one would think. We were segregated, which is better for performance I have been told from the veterans, but it distances you from the Olympic experience. Being in the village and eating among other athletes and sitting with other Canadians and learning about their sports and experiences and selection processes was really neat. Watching them compete in their respective activities and cheering them on is really exciting.

I did also have time to go to the "Great Wall" and the "Summer Palace". Both were musts while in China. The Wall was a very surreal place. It was something I had always heard about, but never imagined going and seeing it. Wow. I can't even imagine the construction of that!

The entire trip was a lesson. I learned so much from racing, from teammates, from other athletes, and from the Chinese. I can't wait to do it all again. Too bad that's another 4 years away. I told my coach that I was disappointed in our results and he told me "That's what the Olympics is all about. That will fuel your training for the next four years." He's right. I am off right now to go lift and start the process again!

Thanks so much!
-Janine

P.S Thanks for all of your messages that you wrote back to me. I did respond to some of them, but want you to all know that they were much appreciated. Especially after not qualifying for the final I wrote an e-mail and went to bed. I didn't sleep a wink and I just kept re-playing the race over and over in my head thinking if there might have been something that could have made us faster. I was frustrated and exhausted in the morning and waking up to a bunch of very nice e-mails brought me to tears! Thank you!