

FIRS 2011 “The Official Junior Men World Championships in Roccaraso, Italy

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Players began to arrive in Rome on June 28th and 29th to take in some sightseeing and adapt to the time change and altitude. Nine players and their traveling families spent 3 fantastic days touring the great ruins of Rome and the Vatican as well as the Pantheon, Coliseum, Maxiset. The tour thru these ancient ruin was breathtaking as well as educational but the Vatican tour of the gardens, museums and the Sistine Chapel capped the tour off. Vibrant colors still magnified off the plaster ceiling from Michelangelo, each telling a story about Kings, Rulers and Church leaders. With the first 3 days of the trip being this spectacular, the players were also able to adapt to the great food and the time change moving forward 6 hours. The balance of the team arrived on July 2 and we all met at the airport to take our bus for the 2 ½ ride to Roccaraso.

Day 1 (7/2/11) We arrived at our hotel just in time to drop our suitcases and go to have our first practice as TEAM USA. Most of the players have never played together unlike some of the other teams representing their countries that practice more often. After the 1 hour practice we walked back to the hotel for dinner and then a walk into the town of Roccaraso. A little R &R and finally we went back to hotel to get some rest.

Day 2 (7/3/11) On Sunday, we had a dry practice outside of the hotel to do walk through, dinner then off to the opening ceremonies. The rink was packed and the federation put on a very nice ceremony. Then back to hotel to hang out with the women’s team then bed check.

Day 3 (7/4/11) Monday the Junior Men’s first day of competition and as expected we started out slow against TEAM BRAZIL but Team USA kicked it in gear and swept way ahead of BRAZIL and posted their first win 7-1. After the game Team USA went into town for pizza and relaxed for a while.

Day 4 (7/5/11) Up for breakfast 9 a.m., team meetings and walk through practice then rest and get ready for TEAM COLUMBIA. Team USA knew that if we took our time during these preliminary games and used our individual talents we would prevail and beat this totally improved TEAM COLUMBIA. After lunch, we walked to the arena to watch a little and get

motivated to play. As expected, we were a little sluggish and TEAM USA found themselves in a tie game at the end of the first period. Coach Bond in the locker room gave them his view and his vision on how the game would end up and the players came out flying in the second period and beat TEAM COLUMBIA 6-4.

Day 5 (7/6/11) Team USA had to face off with TEAM GERMANY for the final game of the preliminaries and it was a good back and forth game but TEAM GERMANY could not hold up the speed and skill of TEAM USA and when the buzzer sounded TEAM USA had won the game 6-2.

Day 5 (7/6/11) The Semi-Finals were here! The USA would face pool C winner Columbia. Columbia already had lost to TEAM USA earlier and they came out with everything they had and then some. The physical part of the game was increased, they tried everything they could to slow down TEAM USA but in the end they lost a very good 4-2 game to TEAM USA.

Day 6 (7/7/11) The Gold Medal Game! **The FIRS Junior Men's World Championship Game.** It was what the guys came for and it was here. To make it even more interesting it was against the totally expected Czech team. They play together for 2 months, they are schooled very well and they are always if not the best team in the worlds. Team USA went out and played, fought their way back each time but the Czech team was too much to handle without the preparation that is required to win over the Czechs. Team USA lost the Gold medal to the Czech but did come away with the SILVER MEDAL, an accomplishment in itself.

Head Coach Jeff Bond did a great job extracting the abilities and talents from each player and to mix it to become the SILVER MEDAL WINNER OF THE 2011 championships. Each player learned that separately they were good and talented but together they were great. Watching the closing ceremonies and seeing the Junior Men's team proud of their silver medal and singing the National Anthem was worth the trip and experience. Congratulations to the 2011 Junior Men's World Championship Team, a recognition you will never forget!