

World Bodybuilding Championships, Acapulco, North Cyprus!

I wanted to take a moment to share with you the true delight (and dream come true) that it was to both qualify, and compete in the World Bodybuilding Championships, Acapulco, North Cyprus!

The moment I received the letter that invited me to compete in the World Bodybuilding Championships, Acapulco, North Cyprus I was more than overjoyed and overwhelmed. You might have guessed (or already know) that competing in the fantastic NABBA regional events in itself is a real commitment of dedication and determination, but it is indeed incredibly rewarding and an experience that is unrivaled! Then taking that up a notch: to the excitement and new challenges that the international stage might bring.... well that is another story in itself!

A crucial aspect of any competition plan is knowing what is happening, what to expect, and to be able to expect the unexpected! Well thankfully this is all information that Jim, Marianne and the rest of the NABBA team were on board for to patiently reassure, to advise and to assist in any way possible. When you are planning a trip halfway around the world, you can imagine that there are quite a few differences in competition preparation! For this I am so glad that there was such a team spirit!

The team was briefed via email, since we all were coming from different regions: Trudy from Gisbourne, Maureen and Jim from Palmerston North, Karl from Auckland, and me from Dunedin. There was an official hotel, the option to book onto the same team flight, details of transfers to and from the airport, even a complete comprehensive guide of what you might not know: for instance you know that you can take food onto a plane for your journey, but when you disembark at the final destination you must throw any left over food away. This was very useful to know! Also: did you know that the latest day to arrive after such long haul flights is the Wednesday before a Saturday competition? No amount of my own research online would have told me that!

Marianne took care of all the booking of the hotel and communication for the trip. If you have any experience of being carb depleted, you will know very well that it is great to have someone who isn't carb depleted taking care of important finer details.....

So the day arrived: I got to the airport and had my checklist ticked off and sorted for all of the flights. Despite it being a 36 hour journey ahead of me I had the most energy and excitement pumping around my body!

One of the really special parts about competing in the Worlds was that we stayed at the same hotel! The hotel was packed to the brim with international competitors and teams arriving from literally all around the globe.

When I arrived the organizer and president for the North Cyprus region personally greeted me at the hotel, and assisted me to check in (since I do not speak Turkish), showed me to my room, took me to the local supermarket, and even took me to the local gym where I was introduced to

the owner and was told that I could come back and train at any time! The unique thing about this sport is the sense of team and family. Here was people that I had never met before who were welcoming me with open arms to their country!

When the rest of the team arrived we had a great briefing meeting where Jim reassured all of our nerves, and briefed us with what was to come. I think if you are a competitor you will know these nerves that I talk about: one minute you look in the mirror and think yes, this is really much better than Ive ever looked and prepped.... the next you think o my goodness I don't think I should be here! What was even better about prepping for this competition however was that it was as if we had our own support squad: we were all in the same boat, happy to help each other and discussing different approaches that we use in competition preparation. I cannot convey how valuable this has been! Its so good to meet people who have tried many things you read about and think 'maybe next time' and get their insight and their point of view for how things pan out with such different preparation!

Even more awesome was the team spirit and support that was around each of us 24/7. Not just within our NZ team but between nations: I met the most fantastically generous couple who were competing: they assisted me by not only lending me an electrical adapter but delivering it to the hotel as well! I had not managed to source one before my departure from NZ and for the life of my own searching could not source one available to purchase in the town itself!

The evening before the competition was a lot of fun with the other NZ athletes: after Jim had taken us around the luxury convention centre venue which was set up for the show (with over 1000 seats to spectate might I add!), we had a bit of a team photo shoot on the beach which was at the front of the hotel. That night we had a bit of a tan party and diffused our nerves over some wine and sharing stories about the NABBA competitions which we had competed in all around NZ.

That night, (you know how it is) I don't think I slept more than 2 hours: I was far too excited and I kept going through my posing in my head. I was thinking of all the awesome advice that Jim and my fellow team mates had imparted on me and imagined what the day would be like! The excitement of the whole process and thinking about how much fun it had been to spend the last few days before stepping on the international stage with such amazing people at an amazing coveted vacation destination, all as part and parcel of the experience!

I woke up before my alarm went off and get ready. I was going to be first up in the show, and Maureen, Trudy and Karl were evenly spaced throughout the day show. Even more convenient was the fact that our hotel room was no more than 60 seconds walk to the actual venue itself! The day ran like clockwork, and it was a blur of excitement and pride as we watched each other take the stage in our line ups! Even more heartwarming was how helpful and endearing and encouraging each of the NZ athletes were towards each other: not to mention competitors from other countries who could not speak or understand English!

It really was a different 'world' competing with many different nationalities and cultures. But the really neat thing was that as different as we all were, we were all going about doing the same kinds of things: dream tanning, carb loading and supporting each other!

What blows my mind even more is the camaraderie shown.... all of these people (except Jim) I had met only a few days before. Yet we all were getting along like family, and there was no request too big or too small: in fact many things (like a touch up of dream tan here, or a rice cracker there) was already offered and initiated before the words even needed to be uttered!

I am so proud of our team as well! Whilst overcoming all the exciting challenges and getting the honor of being a part of such an event was a treasure in itself, Trudy was placed 5th in women's physique, and Maureen 6th in women's Figure, and both got a World trophy! Myself and Karl even got as close as to be 7th in the Shape class and Body class respectively.

If anyone is ever curious about what competing internationally is like, I think the best way to describe it is 'unreal' and it is honestly an experience that you will never forget for the rest of your life. I have made memories that seem so unbelievable that I ask myself whether it was actually all a dream. But all I need to do is look at my medal from the World stage to remind me! I have made really great friends who I cannot wait to catch up with at the next NABBA regional event! I have learned so much as a result, and know that all of the things that I have 'picked up' as a result of competing internationally will certainly up my game for competing and improving my physique in general. I mean, how often do you get the opportunity to spend time as a team with others who are competing in the last few days before a competition, and see everything jump into action 'first hand'!?

Thank you NABBA!

Susan Baxter
Ms. NZ Shape 2012.