

Introduction

The World Lacrosse Championship (WLC) is the largest international men's field lacrosse tournament organized by the Federation of International Lacrosse (FIL) held every 4 years. This year it took place in Netanya, Israel between the 11th and 21st of July with a total of 46 participating countries, making it the largest WLC of all-time. The WLC tournament format is rather complex, with the top 6 teams – based on the 2014 WLC rankings – placed in a separate division (blue division) and the remaining countries drawn into 14 different pools and compete on a round-robin basis. The respective winners of each pool (top seed) would then advance to play each other in an elimination format and further advance to compete against teams in the blue division for gold; whereas second and third seeded teams, as well as eliminated teams (top seeded teams that lost in elimination), would play for world rankings.

Preparation

Our preparation as a team for the 2018 WLC dates back to March 2017 when the first round of the open try-out selection for the Hong Kong National Team took place. The selection process enlisted 30 players to be part of the preliminary training squad. It provided other players and I an opportunity to train and learn under a sophisticated coaching staff to improve our calibre of play through regular intensive on-field training, strength and conditioning, classroom sessions, as well as international competitions; such as the 2017 & 2018 Hong Kong Lacrosse Open (HKLO), the 2017 Asia Pacific Championships (ASPAC) in South Korea, and the 2018 Southern Cross Tournament in Australia. The long and rigorous preparation allowed us as players to build better chemistry and become more physically and mentally equipped to play at a high level within an intensive tournament schedule. It also allowed the coaching staff to better evaluate our individual performances, thus suitability for the final 23 man roster.

1 month prior to our departure, we were training 5 times a week – 3 on-field sessions and 2 gym sessions – making it the most intensive training period of our preparation. Throughout this period we focused on game strategies, familiarising with plays, and sharpening our on-field execution. Although it was extremely challenging battling fatigue from session to session it forced us to stay mentally focus during each and every drill and simulated the physical conditions we would play with at the WLC.

Training Camp [Ashkelon, Israel]

6 days before our first WLC game vs. Luxembourg we arrived in Ashkelon where several other teams have already arrived and began their preparation for the WLC. There, we were scheduled for a training camp to acclimatize ourselves with the Israeli weather and focus on nothing but lacrosse and continue to fine-tune different aspects of our game. During this time we had 1 to 2 trainings per day and we also had the opportunity to play against the Israel Development Team which was invaluable to us due to the limited opportunities to play against different teams prior to the WLC. The game helped us identify areas of our game that needed work on and established training goals for our final practice before departing to Netanya.

2018 FIL World Lacrosse Championship [Netanya, Israel]

The weather in Netanya was hot and humid, with most games running under broad daylight. It was definitely a challenging part of the tournament. Thankfully our first game vs. Luxembourg was scheduled at night, allowing us to ease into the tone of the competition. The nerves and excitement before the game was intangible, my first game on the big stage, I felt the pressure to perform and play my game. As a team we took our time to get comfortable and run out the nerves at the beginning of the game. Once that was out of the way we stuck to our game plan and won the first game of our pool 20 : 1 giving us a confident start to the tournament. Carrying the momentum from our first game, we carried on to beat Poland [9 : 7] and Uganda [16 : 1] placing first in our pool. The more remarkable feat was beating Poland as we lost to them 14 : 4 in the 2014 WLC. Therefore to us it was a statement game.

Advancing as top seed we went head on against Germany (ranked 9th in the 2014 WLC) and lost 4 : 12 and was eliminated and scheduled to play for rankings. In the subsequent game we lost to New Zealand (ranked 12th in the 2014 WLC) in a tight game [9 : 11]. These were the two most difficult games we played in the tournament and also illustrated to us the European style of play which we lacked exposure to. In the remaining games we played Poland again in a convincing victory [16 : 5] and lost to Czech Republic [8 : 9] and beat Hungary [15 : 5] to end the tournament placing 27th out of 46 teams.



Summary

To play in the 2018 WLC for me was a long awaited opportunity since I first picked up a stick in 2014 when I played for St. John's College, HKU. This experience allowed me to not only play against international teams of high calibre and from within take away various learning points, but also the chance to watch up-close the finesse of top-tiered teams e.g. USA and Canada – the pace, creativity, skill, and tenacity of play that I as a player strive to reach. Although as a team we were disappointed with our results having missed our initial goal of 20th or better, there was much to take away from the tournament; and in comparison to the 2014 WLC Hong Kong has come a long way in terms of our level of play as demonstrated by our statistics. The next step of our journey is again to prepare for the 2022 WLC and the many international tournaments that build up to it which will continue to provide us an opportunity to get better and compete for the gold in 2022.









