

## Linda's Beijing Journal: Day 11

By Charles F. Gardner

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*Editor's note: Linda McDonald is writing a daily journal for JSOnline, tracking the progress of West Allis gymnast Chellsie Memmel and commenting on the Olympic scene in Beijing. Linda is a nationally rated gymnastics judge, clinician and choreographer and close friend of the Memmel family. Originally from Green Bay, Linda now lives in Aurora, Ill.*

**Beijing** - We just finished lunch at the Bank of America House. Food has not been too much of an issue thanks to this place and our hotel.

Breakfast is complimentary at our hotel. You can have cereal, toast, fruit, pancakes, French toast filled with peanut butter (my personal favorite), eggs, omelets, rolls, tea and coffee, same as at home. They have yogurt but it is very runny and you drink it with a straw.

The other food available is Chinese lunch food. A variety of mystery meat is available. Ginger salad, garlic sauteed vegetables, fish salads, fried rice, noodles (usually Asian but today it was spaghetti), dumplings and dim sum are on the menu.

I thought I would lose weight here, but the French toast is too good to pass up.

Having the girls with us lately, we have been eating at Mr. Pizza. The Olympic Green has a sampling of weird sausages, and the only restaurant is a McDonald's, so we have eaten there a few times. Bank of America House has a complimentary lunch and dinner buffet for the friends and families of athletes, and it has been wonderful.

This morning we had tickets to see track and field. We were so excited to have the opportunity to get inside the Bird's Nest. The day's events were men's 400-meter and 100-meter prelims, women's hammer throw, men's triple jump and men's hurdles.

The hammer throw was interesting. After the hammer lands, they put it in a remote control car to send it back to the starting point. I was amazed at the cage they throw from, and how small the opening was. Several of the women hit the cage with their throws.

The running was exciting, and the U.S. did well in qualifying. The triple jump was on the other side of the stadium so our view was not the best.

The hurdles occurred right in front of us and that is what I liked the best. The two U.S. men, David Oliver and David Payne, won their heats. But it was too bad that Chinese hurdler Liu Xiang could not compete. After a false start in his heat, he just turned and walked off the track.

The Chinese fans were stunned that their hero (who has an inflamed Achilles) would not be able to defend the gold medal he won in Athens.

Of course, we know all about injuries after Chellsie suffered her broken ankle in training here. In fact, the new saying among the gymnasts is to "Mommel it up," because Chellsie competed on uneven bars despite a broken foot.

The Bird's Nest is very impressive from the outside. Inside it was very nice, but we all felt like the inside was just another stadium.

When we leave here, we will head back to the Olympic Green for gymnastics event finals, featuring Nastia Liukin on the uneven bars (Liukin finished with a silver medal).