

Linda's Beijing Journal: Day Two

By Charles F. Gardner

Saturday, Aug 9 2008, 12:56 PM

Editor's note: Linda McDonald will write 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 started our day by attending the USA men's preliminary competition. The men competed in the first subdivision and the scores were tight. The absence of Paul and Morgan Hamm was evident, but the men still did an outstanding job. We are hoping the team and some individuals move on to finals (the team advanced, and Jonathan Horton and Sasha Artemev reached the all-around finals and one event final apiece).

After the competition we ventured around the Olympic Green. The National Indoor Stadium, where the gymnastics is being held, is huge and a perfect venue for gymnastics. Next door is the Aquatic Stadium or Water Cube. The building literally looks as if it were encased in bubble wrap.

The Bird's Nest and the Olympic torch are in perfect view. The home of track and field, and the opening and closing ceremonies, the structure is mind boggling! It certainly does look like a bird's nest. The architecture of all the buildings is state-of-the-art and so impressive.

After the competition we took advantage of all the corporate sponsor exhibitions. It is amazing how many people greet you as you enter. As many as 20 smiling, happy faces will greet you as you enter with a big "welcome" and sometimes a high five. The hospitality could not be better.

We experimented with transportation today. When we went to the men's competition, we took a taxi. Taxis are only allowed to go to the beginning of the Olympic Green. From there you clear a security checkpoint, which leads to a train that leads to the stadiums and exhibitions. Security is very thorough.

U.S. national team member Shayla Worley, who is injured and not competing in Beijing, is here watching with her mother and grandmother. Grandma Worley had many suspicious contents in her purse. Security asked her to drop some eye drops into her eye, apply her hand lotion, eat her chocolate and re-apply her lipstick. As amusing as it was, the security is top-notch.

On the way back to our hotel we decided to try the new subway. The process involves a series of three trains back to our hotel. The trains are very clean and the system is easy to navigate. We will be using the subway from here on out.

Still suffering a little jet lag, we are calling it a night.