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Lombardia letters: Brown blogs from Bergamo

2015 U.S. champion takes readers behind the scenes from Northern Italy

Posted 9/8/16 by Jason Brown, special to icenetwork



Jason Brown, pictured here with fellow Team USA men Grant Hochstein (middle) and Max Aaron (right), is excited to get the season started at the Lombardia Trophy. -courtesy of Jason Brown

2015 U.S. champion [Jason Brown](#) made his season debut at the Lombardia Trophy in Bergamo, Italy. He kept a blog for icenetwork.

Monday, Sept. 12

Since I wasn't competing Saturday, and I didn't have practice until later in the night, my dad, my aunt, my coach Kori [Ade] and I all went to Lake Como to spend the afternoon.

With my dad driving and my aunt navigating, you never know what to expect. Supposedly, the drive from Bergamo to the lake should have taken an hour, but after many missed exits, wrong turns, a constantly

recalculating GPS, and tons of laughing and sharing stories, we made it to the beautiful town of Varenna 2 1/2 hours later! And wow...it was spectacular.

When we got there, the four of us rented two double-seated kayaks and spent an hour paddling around the lake, swimming in the refreshing water and looking around in awe and admiration at the utter beauty of Lake Como. I honestly felt like I was dreaming. The scenery looked as though it was painted -- the water was so pure and clear -- and I felt like I was in some sort of movie while walking around the magical town.

I always tell myself that life is about the journey and not the destination, but in that day, I really understood it. I could have complained that I made a mistake for sitting in a car for almost three hours when I had practice that night and was competing my long program the next day...I could have let myself get more and more frustrated when the GPS would add another 25 miles every time we missed an exit and we had to drive another 12.5 miles before we could make a U-turn...I could have focused on all the things that went wrong on our way to the lake...but I forced myself to let go of those fears and allowed myself to enjoy and love every moment that I spent with my family. I laughed as the GPS recited our newest route, and I soaked up all the beautiful sites we passed on our drive that we wouldn't have seen if we hadn't kept getting lost. So, while it's not always about the destination, I realized that day that the destination is much better, and more incredible, when I truly enjoy and embrace the journey, no matter how long or crazy it may be!

Days two and three of competition

In the final two days of competition, all four events came to an end. While the dance event was just beginning, the ladies and pairs competed their long programs. Jessica [Pfund] and Josh [Santillan] finished the pairs event in fourth, with Mirai [Nagasu] winning the bronze in ladies shortly thereafter.

Julia [Biechler] and Damian [Dodge] skated two beautiful programs in their senior international debut, finishing fourth in dance. Also, side note: While we were in Bergamo, Julia turned 18! So if you know her, wish her a happy belated birthday. :)

The men's event concluded Sunday afternoon, with Max, Grant and I finishing third, fifth and second, respectively. As a team, we are excited to take our experience in Italy and use it to grow and learn for our upcoming events...onward and upward. :)

Did you know?

The gelato flavor stracciatella was invented in Bergamo! Grant and I even had the opportunity to go to the gelateria that first made it...and, of course, we got some. It was...WOW!

A big thanks

I would like to thank Bergamo, the Ice Lab rink and staff, and the incredible local organizing committee for putting on such an unbelievable event! Thanks for all the love, support and help while we were in your beautiful city. I know the entire U.S. team hopes to come back in the near future! We definitely didn't want to leave. :)

Also, I want to take the time to thank our team leaders and U.S. judges Kathleen Harmon and Todd Bromley. Thanks for all you did to make this event so special and memorable for the U.S. team.

Ciao for now!

Saturday, Sept. 10

Perks of late-night practice

Every competition, whether international or not, brings a new and different practice schedule. Sometimes the schedules have us waking up at the crack of dawn, and other times we're skating late into the night. Whatever it is, we make the best of it and use it as a learning opportunity and an added experience for future events. At this particular event, on the days we aren't competing, we have pretty late practices. For example, on Saturday night, our 40-minute practice doesn't finish until after 10 p.m.! On the other hand, it gives us all day to go exploring -- and that's one of the perks of having late-night practices!

Friday, Sept. 9

Day One of competition

Friday marked the first day of competition in Bergamo, with the pairs, ladies and men all competing their short programs. There always seem to be more jitters and excitement for the first international event of the season, as everyone's trying to get a starting point for the new year. Jessica [Pfund] and Josh [Santillan] are heading into the pairs long in fourth. Mirai [Nagasu] is sitting in second, and Max [Aaron], Grant [Hochstein] and I are currently in third, fifth and second, respectively.

While the dancers begin Saturday, the pairs and ladies long programs will cap off the second day of competition here in Italy.

More adventures and stories to come...ciao!

Thursday, Sept. 8

Exploring Bergamo

On Thursday morning, our team leaders held a 10 a.m. meeting wherein we discussed logistics, some rule changes, competition schedules, etc. From there, Team USA ventured up to the Old City. After some walking, two buses and tons of stops to take pictures along the way, we made it to the center. With its small, cobblestone streets, beautiful city squares, incredible architecture, warm-hearted people and stunning views, Bergamo has officially won me over!

We spent a few hours in the city and got some delicious lunch. It took so long to pick a place to eat because everything looked so good -- we wanted to try it all! It's far from a myth that Italy is known for its food...and it never disappoints.

Wednesday, Sept. 7

A new season dawns

It's that time of year again -- time for a new season to begin! With the 2016 Summer Olympics just ending and the 2016 Paralympic Games ramping up, the level of excitement and inspiration we skaters are feeling is through the roof. It sounds crazy, but there are less than 18 months until the 2018 Olympic Winter Games -- the countdown is so real. So, now is the time to start focusing on your favorite skaters as they begin the march to 2018 in PyeongChang. The next year and a half of competition, experience and adventure will play a major role in the selection of the next Olympic team.

With each new season comes new goals, challenges and a whole bunch of unforgettable moments and memorable trips. Not a day goes by that I don't remind myself how lucky I am to have the opportunity to represent the United States of America, compete in the sport I love and perform in front of the most amazing fans from around the world!

What is a senior B?

I just landed in Italy today for an event that falls under the "senior B" category. Senior B's are smaller international competitions that allow skaters to gain points to improve their ranking in the ISU World Standings. World rankings determine which skaters are put in the pool to be selected for a Grand Prix and are used to seed skaters in the starting orders for the big events (such as Grand Prix, Four Continents, worlds, etc). In fact, senior B's are the perfect opportunity for skaters to get some experience competing their new programs before the Grand Prix Series begins. They give us a chance to debut new programs internationally early in the season, which is an important part of developing the strongest possible performances for the biggest events later in the season.

Travel day.

By 11:30 am (on Wednesday), our entire team had made it to Bergamo, Italy, a beautiful city outside Milan (which I will talk more about tomorrow when I have the opportunity to explore it). Once we landed in

Italy, we checked into the hotel and did our best to stay awake and keep moving! Although practicing the same day you arrive at an international competition is rare, we all got to practice for 30 minutes in the competition rink in the evening. It was nice to get a feel for the ice and get my body moving a little after being in four airports, taking three flights and traveling for more than 18 hours...but at the end of the day, we're all here and ready for the adventure ahead!

Catch up with you guys tomorrow. Ciao!



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