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## The Journey Begins: Brown blogs from South Korea

U.S. bronze medalist takes readers behind the scenes at Four Continents

Posted 2/13/17 by Jason Brown, special to icenetwork



Team USA members Jason Brown and Mirai Nagasu pose with a PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympics mascot at the airport in Seoul. -courtesy of Jason Brown

*U.S. bronze medalist Jason Brown is competing at the 2017 Four Continents Championships in Gangneung, South Korea, this week. He is keeping a blog for icenetwork.*

### Saturday, Feb. 18-Sunday, Feb. 19

Saturday night marked the conclusion of the pairs and ladies events. Brandon [Frazier] and Haven [Denney], and Ashley [Cain] and Tim [LeDuc] finished eighth and ninth, respectively, while Chris [Knierim] and Alexa [Scimeca Knierim] finished sixth. Each pair looked so beautiful and said they were pleased with their performances.

In the ladies competition, Karen [Chen] and Mariah [Bell] finished 12th and sixth, while Mirai [Nagasu] took home the bronze medal after delivering a beautiful free skate. The men's event saw Grant [Hochstein] and I land ninth and sixth, respectively, while Nathan [Chen] killed it by landing five quads in his free skate to win the overall event.

After Team USA claimed one gold, one silver and two bronze medals, I left South Korea so unbelievably proud, and I will always be honored to represent the United States of America.

## THE EXHIBITION

At the end of each event, there is generally an exhibition. This includes the top three skaters in each discipline plus additional "invited" skaters. In South Korea, the exhibition took place Sunday night after the competition came to a close. With the serious portion of the trip over, everyone was relaxed and having fun backstage. Yu-Na Kim, who handed out flowers to each one of the medalists during the event, delivered a speech recapping the week, and also got everyone pumped up about next year's Olympics.

## CLOSING BANQUET

After the exhibition, we all went back to the hotel and changed into dresses and suits for the closing banquet. Every banquet is unique and different depending on the event and country we are in. The banquets have ranged from sit-down dinners to dance parties with a DJ. In South Korea, we had a cocktail party that included a DJ.

We all danced with the PyeongChang mascots, Soohorang and Bandabi, and let me just say...they were tearin' up the dance floor! There was also a raffle where we could win prizes. It's always nice ending the competition together, especially since these banquets serve as the perfect setting for pictures and catching up with each other.

## OLYMPIC PARK

Along with the figure skating and short track rink, the coastal village includes the men's ice hockey, curling and long track speed skating arenas. Throughout the week, we all walked around the area admiring the beautiful venues. The park area had lots of cultural demonstrations, shows, Olympic-themed activities, food stands and other games, and you could always feel that the Olympic spirit was alive. The Olympic rings were prominently displayed and, of course, everyone took pictures with them.

I definitely dream about the opportunity to see it packed and finished in a year's time!

## NEXT STOP, HELSINKI!

With the most recent event now over, we shift our focus to the world championships in Helsinki, which begin March 29. The Four Continents Championships served as a great pre-worlds event, giving everyone another opportunity to compete their programs internationally one last time before heading to worlds. After a few days of rest and recovery, we'll all get back to work, and I know everyone on Team USA is excited to continue training for the biggest event of the year.

I hope everyone has enjoyed my blog. Thank you so much for reading and following along with me during my week in South Korea. I love you all!

Until next time!

## **Friday, Feb. 17**

### BEACHIN'

Surprisingly enough, our hotel is across the street from a beautiful beach! Being winter, there isn't much action going on around the water, but it didn't stop us from going and walking around in the sand. I remember being so shocked when I found out that Sochi was also along the water, but I guess maybe it's the new Winter Olympic trend. :)

### THE MEN FINALLY BEGIN!

Having been in South Korea since Sunday, Grant [Hochstein], Nathan [Chen] and I were definitely excited to start competing. Before we even began, the dancers finished their week of competition. They all were stunning, finishing second (Maia Shibutani and Alex Shibutani), third (Madison Chock and Evan Bates) and fourth (Madison Hubbell and Zachary Donohue). It was a pretty awesome week for the U.S. dance teams!

Nathan was the first of the U.S. men to skate, and he brought the house down! He sits in first heading into Sunday's free program. Grant was next and rocked it as well, getting a personal-best score and finishing in seventh. While I didn't have the greatest skate, it was a step up from the U.S. championships, so I am excited to be heading in the right direction on my road to worlds.

I was one proud teammate last night. I couldn't be happier for our men and dancers!

## **Wednesday, Feb. 15-Thursday, Feb. 16**

Four Continents this year is serving as the Olympic test event, meaning that we, the athletes, have the opportunity to compete in the Olympic venue, on the Olympic ice! Basically, the goal of this event is to simulate the way competition will run at the Games in order to see if modifications need to be made to any aspect of the venue before 2018.

There is something so special about stepping into this arena. Regardless of whether we all get the opportunity to come back in a year, we all feel so lucky to embrace the chance to be part of the Olympic buzz.

## THE RINK

The rink is absolutely beautiful! With blue-shaded boards, seating and decorations, the arena feels so homey, bright and welcoming. The ice feels great as well, and it's been a real privilege having the opportunity to skate on it.

Below the main rink is the practice rink...literally below! We take an elevator down to "Basement 2" to get to the practice rink. It's much smaller, with just a few rows of seating on one side. It's crazy to think that we could be/are practicing while events are going on right above us!

The whole venue is set up like a maze. Every time I walk into the arena, I notice something new or find another door that leads down another hall. There are tons of signs on the walls directing us to the various different locations: media, warm-up room, skaters lounge, quiet room (where beds are set up for skaters to sleep or rest if they are stuck at the rink for a long time), bathrooms, locker room, practice rink, main rink entrance, wardrobe, massage room...the list just keeps going on. All I can say is that there is a lot going on behind the scenes, before we step through the curtains and into the arena part of the main rink.

## DAY ONE RESULTS

On the first day of competition, the dancers, pairs and ladies competed. Maia [Shibutani] and Alex [Shibutani], Madi [Chock] and Evan [Bates], and Madi [Hubbell] and Zach [Donohue] all skated their incredible blues/hip hop short dances, finishing second, third and fourth, respectively. Their competition wraps up Friday afternoon with the free dance.

The pairs went next. Alexa [Scimeca Knierim] and Chris [Knierim] rocked the house in their first competition of the season, finishing sixth. Both Haven [Denney] and Brandon [Frazier], and Ashley [Cain] and Tim [LeDuc] skated beautifully, and they sit in eighth and ninth, respectively.

The ladies were the last to go, with Mirai [Nagasu] finishing fifth, Mariah [Bell] seventh and Karen [Chen] 12th. Both the pairs and the ladies will compete their free skates Saturday.

Stay tuned for more!

**Monday, Feb. 13-Tuesday, Feb. 14**

## CHUNCHEON

For the first two days in South Korea, the majority of Team USA stayed and trained in the city of Chuncheon, which sort of lies in between Incheon (where the airport is located) and Gangneung (where the competition venue is located). It is always fun having the opportunity to all train together as a team before splitting up during the competition week.

The purpose of going to Chuncheon first was to test out the facilities. U.S. Figure Skating will be using that venue as a practice site during the Olympics, so skaters will have the opportunity to get in some extra training time there before or during the Games.

## LOST IN TRANSLATION

It's always an adventure when we head out to restaurants in other parts of the world! You are never sure what you will find or if you will be able to successfully order what you want. Karen [Chen], Mrs. Chen, Grant [Hoshstein], Kori [Ade] and I all went out to dinner in downtown Chuncheon and wandered into a really cute local restaurant. We all sat on cushions on a heated floor and were handed menus with no pictures and no English on them. A really nice man who spoke a little bit of English saw us struggling and helped us try to decipher the menu. In the end, we just told him the types of food we enjoy and then he ordered for us. Well, the food kept on coming, and we didn't exactly know what we were eating, but it sure was delicious!

## HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY

On Valentine's Day, the whole team minus the dancers (who were already at the competition venue) made the 2.5-hour drive from Chuncheon to Gangneung. Kori and I were on the bus with all the pairs. To help the time pass, we all sang, danced and laughed while making a fun Valentine's Day music video (watch it [here](#)) and before we knew it, we reached the competition site and checked in for the event.

We are all sending lots of love to everyone back home. We hope that everyone had a great Valentine's Day! :)

## **Saturday, Feb. 11-Sunday, Feb. 12**

While a few people left for Gangneung on Friday, the majority of Team USA headed to their local airports and began their trips to South Korea on Saturday morning. Kori [Ade] and I had a layover in San Francisco, before hopping a 12-hour flight to Seoul.

I happen to love long flights! There is something about flying that makes me feel as though time stops for a bit -- which is sort of ironic considering the flight lands on a different day than it took off. I spent most of the plane ride studying for a school exam I'll be taking while in South Korea, while adding 30-minute "get up, walk around, and stretch" breaks after each hour of studying. Now I just hope the wi-fi in our hotel is good enough so I can take my exam.

Also, since I'm studying Japanese, I watched *Finding Dory* in Japanese while on the flight, which was really cool. I'm not able to fully understand it quite yet, but I try writing the words I hear and don't understand, then look each word up later. I'm trying my best to expand my vocabulary!

Upon landing and clearing customs, we headed to baggage claim where, to our excitement, PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympics mascots were set up at every baggage carousel. Mirai [Nagasu] and I quickly ran over to the first one we saw and started taking pictures together.

The picture-taking continued as we made our way out of baggage claim and into the arrival section of the airport. There were lots of Olympic signs, decorations, fun little Olympic themed stations and a countdown clock. With less than one year to go, you could feel the Olympic spirit in the air!

Team USA is practicing for two days in Chuncheon, and I'll tell you more about the city and why we are practicing there in the blogs to come.

Until next time!



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