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Seoul Man: Brown blogs from Four Continents

U.S. champion takes readers behind the scenes at event in South Korea

Posted 2/10/15 by Jason Brown, special to icenetwork



Jason Brown is having a great time with his U.S. teammates (like Samantha Cesario and Adam Rippon, pictured here) at the Four Continents Championships. -Courtesy of Jason Brown

Fresh off his gold-medal finish at the U.S. championships, [Jason Brown](#) was in Seoul, South Korea, for the [2015 Four Continents Championships](#). He chronicled his experience in a blog for icenetwork.

Monday, Feb. 16

Extra day in Seoul

Whenever I travel overseas, my parents always try to incorporate an extra day into the trip so that Kori and I can see some of the city. My mom always gets these travel books and researches all the must-see places prior to the event, and she and my dad go all over the city during the week when I'm competing.

Then, once the competition is over, my parents pick their favorite spots they got to see, and then they take me and Kori around for a day!

The rain won't stop us

On Monday, it rained...but we didn't care. We switched some plans around and it turned out to be an incredibly fun day of experiences in Seoul!

We started by going to a huge indoor amusement park called Lotte World. There were games, roller coasters, entertainment and great food! Everything was in Korean, of course, so sometimes we thought we were waiting in line for one ride but ended up on another...and we couldn't stop laughing when they told us the rules and directions of the ride, because we had no clue what they were saying, and then we'd be off...such an adventure!

After that, it was still pretty rainy, so we stopped by a Korean spa. We each had to wear matching outfits, and we got massages. It was quite the experience.

The weather began to clear up, so my parents took us to a market, where we walked around, shopped a bit and ate little bites of food at noodle stands, tea shops, donut bakeries and dessert places. Korean food is soooooo delicious!

For dinner, my dad decided to ask one of the store owners to recommend a place. She not only recommended an amazing place, but she walked us there! It was a good thing, too, because we had to walk through a few alleyways to get there.

It ended up being a super cute little noodle/dumpling house. It was extremely authentic, which we loved. They were packing tons of dumplings at the table next to ours in order to get ready for the Korean New Year, which is later this month. We sat on cushions on the ground, and had to take our shoes off. The entire menu was in Korean, and no one spoke English. I love trying to communicate through charades and attempting to decipher pictures on the menu. The food was unreal!

It was an awesome whole day of Korean immersion!

Perfect posture

Throughout the trip, my parents and I kept admiring everyone's perfect posture, especially at restaurants where they sit cross-legged on the floor. It's truly incredible seeing 80-year-old Korean women and men sitting with their legs crossed so comfortably, and sitting so straight! It's quite a skill.

That's it for me

It was another spectacular trip, filled with memories, friends, adventures, unforgettable moments, unbelievable fans, blogs, great skating, life lessons, great people and experiences!

I loved documenting my trip for you guys. I hope you enjoyed my Four Continents blog. :)

Until next time...

Love,

Jason

Sunday, Feb. 15

The fourth and final day of competition came to end with the ladies free skate, exhibition and closing banquet. It was a day packed with excitement, adventure and celebration!

Ladies free

I woke up Sunday morning super pumped to cheer on the ladies! If I haven't made it obvious enough, supporting my teammates, dressing up in red, white and blue, and proudly cheering from the stands is one of my favorite things of all time!

Samantha [Cesario] was the first of the U.S. ladies to skate, and she rocked it! I've watched Sam do her *Carmen* program for the past two years now, and every time I see it, it gets better and better. She definitely went out with a bang! I feel so lucky I got to see it one last time. She finished the event in ninth.

Polina [Edmunds] was next, and she was awesome! She danced and spun through each element with such ease. She jumped into the lead, and held onto it for the rest of the event, going from fourth to first! It was so exciting to see her win her first Four Continents. I couldn't be happier for her! Fun fact: She became the second-youngest Four Continents ladies champion in history, behind Katy Taylor (also of the USA!).

Gracie concluded the event. She looked beautiful and truly had such an incredible presence on the ice. Although she had a rough start, she fought through the program like a champ, finishing fourth.

Korean market

As I wasn't in the exhibition, after the ladies event ended, my parents, my coach Kori [Ade], Danny [O'Shea] and Tarah [Kayne] and I all took a taxi to a Korean market. It was so cool! There were so many awesome shops, delicious little food stands and cute souvenir stores. We've found everyone in Korea to be so friendly and happy to help. Although the markets were busy, it was surprisingly quiet and laid back.

While in the market, Danny, Tarah and I decided to make a little music video to "Gangnam Style"! Kori filmed as we ran around the marketplace looking at stores, trying on hats, tasting food, dancing with the shop owners...I posted 15 second of it on my Instagram and Twitter if you haven't seen it yet (watch it [here](#)). It was so fun, and everyone walking by us was laughing and dancing along, as they all knew the song!

Closing banquet

As we wear our costumes and athletic clothes all week, it's always nice to get to dress up for closing banquets. It's also the perfect opportunity to take pictures with the other skaters, because everyone from the event is finally in the same place at the same time! :) Every closing banquet is different; the tone usually depends on which country is hosting the event. Sometimes there are sit-down dinners; sometimes it's a dance party with games and activities; sometimes it's set up more like a cocktail party -- it's always a surprise!

At this event, the closing banquet was set up like a cocktail party. There were tables of appetizers, and everyone walked around, mingled and, of course, took tons of selfies! For the welcome gift for the competition, we each got selfie sticks, and some people were trying theirs out at the banquet. There was a D.J. and some music as well as a raffle. It was the best kind of raffle, too, because they called, like, 20-30 people. They gave away Four Continents hats, shirts, hoodies and a few Beats By Dre headphones. I won a hat (see [here](#))! The banquet also symbolizes the conclusion of the event; it's definitely a bittersweet feeling when it's over.

Saturday, Feb. 14

Pairs free

It was a great day for the U.S. pairs team! Alexa [Scimeca] and Chris [Knierim] posted a new season's best and finished the event in fifth. Both Haven [Denney] and Brandon [Frazier], and Tarah [Kayne] and Danny [O'Shea] skated beautiful programs, finishing the competition in seventh and eighth, respectively.

Men's free

It was such an exciting men's event! We all pulled up in the standings from our short programs, and Josh [Farris] brought home a silver medal for Team USA...I'm so proud of him! I finished sixth and Adam [Rippon] took 10th. The competition was full of great growing experiences for us all, and we can't wait to get back home to start preparing for worlds. The future is looking super bright for the U.S. men, and I feel so lucky to be a part of it.

Survivor

The International Skating Union is trying out something new at this event. (Editor's note: The ISU actually debuted this concept at the 2015 European Championships.) The current top three skaters had to sit in the green room and watch the event play out on TV. There was a camera crew capturing the green room skaters' reactions the entire time. Every time someone would skate, depending on his or her score, you'd either get kicked out or "survive," meaning you got to stay in the room during the next skate. So, the room was constantly changing. As soon as you weren't in medal contention, you had to leave the room. It could have been awkward, but we kept the mood light by laughing together about past competitions, taking pictures and just accepting the reality of how we'd skated with poise.

Constantly learning

The entire competition week has been an enormous learning experience for me. I've gotten so used to going into competition feeling super solid with the elements I have planned. At Four Continents, however, that was not the case. As much as I didn't want integrating the quad to affect my confidence throughout the practice sessions and events, it did.

I struggled a lot with confidence this week. The nervousness and uneasiness I felt about the quad trickled into all the other jumps I have trained so well. Working through the insecurities and compartmentalizing the elements were huge barriers I worked extremely hard to push through the entire week.

This event has taught me that I have the ability to persevere and search for new ways to boost my confidence when my "normal" needed to give way to growth. I've learned that sometimes putting yourself in vulnerable situations can lead you to something so much richer and more meaningful...and I've learned that although it's hard to accept, sometimes taking a step back and looking a little messy leads to the greatest opportunities for growth. An event like this will allow me to look back and smile, because I know this was another hurdle I needed to attack head on in order to reach new heights in my skating journey.

Sunday's preview

Sunday marks the fourth and final day of competition. The ladies will take the ice for their free skates, and after that, the exhibition will cap off a great week of skating! The evening will end with the closing banquet...which you will hear all about tomorrow. :)

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY, EVERYONE! Sending all my love from Korea... 

Friday, Feb. 13

Free dance

It was another great day for Team USA ice dance! All three teams rocked the house, each earning personal-best scores for their free dance. Madi [Chock] and Evan [Bates] brought home the silver for

Team USA, while Maia [Shibutani] and Alex [Shibutani] came away with the bronze! Kaitlin [Hawayek] and Jean-Luc [Baker] moved up to fifth. Way to go, dance!

The ladies began

Once dance had finished, it was finally time for the ladies to begin. It was a great event, and the U.S. sits second (Gracie Gold), fourth (Polina Edmonds) and ninth (Samantha Cesario) going into the free skate Sunday. All the scores are super close going into the free, so it will to be one exciting event. I'll be there, in the stands, decked out in red, white and blue, supporting everyone. Listen for my signature cheers...maybe you will be able to hear me through the computer?!?

Small medals

At the big championship events, such as worlds, junior worlds and Four Continents, in addition to the overall medals that are awarded, the ISU also hands out small medals to those skaters who rank in the top three in the short program as well as the free. You don't stand on a podium or anything, but medals are given out during a ceremony backstage!

Thursday, Feb. 12

Competition officially begins

The first day of competition kicked off with ice dance, pairs and men. We all started the day with 30-minute practices in our warm-up groups, which allows us one last time to run through our elements and get our short program music played before we compete later in the day.

Since they won't be competing until tomorrow, the ladies had one more day of two 40-minute practices.

Killer day for Team USA ice dancers

Madison [Chock] and Evan [Bates] paso'd to the lead, while Maia [Shibutani] and Alex [Shibutani] sit in a very close second! Kaitlin [Hawayek] and Jean-Luc [Baker] rocked the house, finishing the segment in sixth.

This year's short dance is the paso doble. It's unbelievable to watch the endless amount of passion each team brings to the ice, while also showing their interpretation of the dance...truly incredible to watch! They compete their free dance Saturday.

Pairs

Alexa [Scimeca] and Chris [Knierim] lead the U.S., sitting in fifth, while Danny [O'Shea] and Tarah [Kayne] are eighth, with Haven [Denney] and Brandon [Frazier] one spot behind them. They are all looking forward to an awesome day of free skates Saturday!

Men's short program

The men's short program was very exciting. There were lots of great skates, and we received a wealth of support from the Korean fans. Josh [Farris] nailed his short program to Ed Sheeran's "Give Me Love," and he is in fifth. I attempted my first quad in competition, which you will read about later in this blog, and finished ninth. Adam [Rippon] is sitting in 12th, and is super excited to kill it in the free skate Saturday! Four Continents is such a great event for learning, growing and trying new things before the world championships next month.

Attempting the quad

Once I got home from the U.S. championships, my coach, Kori [Ade], came to the rink and told me that I would be doing a quad in my short program at Four Continents. I'd been feeling that the jump was ready to land off the harness for a few weeks prior to nationals, and I can always count on a clean fall or an under-rotated two-foot!

I'm not going to lie: I was a bit freaked out when she told me. I was very comfortable with my short program, and I wanted to go to Korea and rock it the way I know I'm capable of, but I trust Kori with my life, and if she says it's time to start this new chapter, then it's time!

The process of integrating a new jump is never easy. Physically, by the end of the season, I am trained enough. Mentally, however, trying to add something new in the week and a half between the U.S. championships and Four Continents -- that's a whole new ballgame.

With that understanding, I had to change my mindset about this event. I had to set new goals, and for this one it was about trying out this new jump, not letting it affect the rest of the program and accepting whatever the outcome may be.

So, was it a good quad attempt in the program? NO. I am capable of executing the quad toe much better than I did, but I didn't pop it and I didn't dwell on the jump. I did the best I could to finish the program strong, and continued to perform to the best of my ability.

It's always hard to take risks and accept the consequences that come along with them, but it's an inevitable process that I am proud I started today, at this event. I'm just taking one big step back so that I'll be ready to take one giant leap forward when I'm completely ready to wrap my head around competing with a quad.

Friday's preview

The day begins with the free dance, followed by the ladies short program. It's always so strange to think that one event will completely finish before another one begins! The pairs and men have another day of practice before continuing the free skates Saturday. Still three more very exciting days of competition to go!

GO USA!

PS - It's Danny's 24th birthday Friday, so let's all make him feel super loved and tweet him "Happy Birthday" [@Doshea213](#)!

Tuesday, Feb. 10/Wednesday, Feb. 11

High-tech rooms

I didn't arrive to the hotel until 11:30 p.m. on Monday. My roommate, Danny [O'Shea], had already been here since Sunday, so I knew he would be sleeping by the time I arrived at the room. When I got there, I slowly opened the door, trying to stay as quiet and inconspicuous as possible. Well, let's just say that didn't work...

The minute I stepped into the room, one of the lights turned on. It was one of those motion sensor lights! Super tired and not thinking straight, I looked frantically for the light switch, which didn't exist, and forgot about the door, which slammed behind me...dang it! Danny woke up. I felt like a spy who had failed his mission.

Trying to be a good roommate, I decided to take my suitcase and get ready for bed in the room of my coach, who didn't have a roommate. As I was leaving the room, I noticed that Danny had put a key in the wall, which activates the use of the lights. Still not thinking 100 percent straight, I took the key out and placed it on the counter so that when I got back to the room, I wouldn't wake him up by turning on the lights.

When I returned, I suddenly realized that by taking out Danny's key, I had deactivated the outlets so nothing would charge. So, I put the key back into the wall...and suddenly every single light in the room turned on -- even the nightlights over the head of of bed! Oh man, I woke Danny up again!

Danny just started laughing, telling me not worry and that it was OK. When I asked him how the lights worked, he held up this computer-screen-looking thing and started pressing buttons, each linked to a different light in the room. It was so cool!

First day of practice ice

When traveling to Asia, it is really nice to have the extra day of practice. Typically when we travel, we have one practice session a day in the main rink before competing the following day, but at this event, we get two. No matter how trained you may feel going into an event, sometimes you just need a day of adjustment after such a long trip.

For me, on my first practice session Tuesday, I was sort of in a daze, unaware of where I was. I was very turned around and confused. I wasn't quite sure where my body was. It was one of those sessions where I just had to push through. The second one, on the other hand, was much better. I still wasn't fully with it, but I left feeling that practice day No. 2 would be more normal.

Team meeting, minus one

I thought that the entire team would be at the team meeting Tuesday night, but it turned out that Polina [Edmunds] didn't arrive until Wednesday! She decided to come in a little later since the ladies don't compete until Friday. During the team meeting, our team leaders, Janis Engel and Deveny Deck, went over what we should expect for the event and how it will run. They handed out team pins that we can use to trade and pass around to other athletes and volunteers, and it gave Team USA a brief moment to all be together in one place at one time.

The draws...

On Wednesday, the pairs, dance and men all drew their starting orders for the short program. I always get nervous for the draw, even though all I have to do is walk up and pick a number! Although over the course of my skating career I've skated in every position imaginable, I still find it so stressful.

The draws are always pretty formal, but the mood was definitely lightened when Takahito Mura was called up before it started and they announced it was his 24th birthday and gave him a mini cake! Then the technical controller led everyone who was present in singing "Happy Birthday." When we reached the part of the song where you insert the person's name, we all sort of mumbled through it, all not completely sure the how to continue singing the song and properly pronounce his name at the same time! It was so cool to watch and sing along with such a diverse, international crowd.

Thursday's preview

The first day of competition is Thursday. Dance, pairs and men will all skate their shorts, in that order. The ladies continue with one more day of practice ice. Everyone is super excited and looking forward to another great day in Korea. And...Polina has arrived!

Time to jump into bed...goodnight!

Monday, Feb. 9

One more run-through

The morning started with a 5 a.m. alarm. Typically, I fight the urge to hit snooze, but today, I jumped out of bed! I couldn't wait to skate one last time before heading to the airport.

I quickly stopped at the grocery store on the way to the rink to pick up a few last-minute things that I still needed for the trip. By 7 a.m., I had done a free skate and was running through my elements one last time before stretching, driving back home and getting picked up by Kori. Our first leg of travel was a quick, 15-minute flight from Colorado Springs to Denver at 9:30 a.m. The journey to Seoul had begun!

Double take

Once arriving in Denver, my coach, Kori Ade, and I made our way to our next departing gate. On the walk over we passed someone with an entourage. It caught my eye and I recognized the person, but I had to do a double take and wipe my eyes to make sure I was seeing correctly! It was Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps! Being the easily starstruck person I am, the minute he looked my way and we made eye contact, I quickly glanced at the ground unable to process what just happened!

Adapting to time change

Our second flight of the day was from Denver to Tokyo. I've gotten pretty good at adapting to time changes when traveling to Europe, but I haven't traveled to Asia in four years. The last time was for the 2011 World Junior Championships in Korea!

Typically, when we go to Europe, we tend to land in the morning, so I've learned to force myself to stay awake all day until late that night. On this trip, although our first flight was 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, we didn't arrive in Seoul until 9:30 p.m. the following day! So, when Kori and I got on our 11 1/2-hour flight to Tokyo, we set our watches 16 hours forward to Korean time. We planned it so that I would sleep on the flight until it was 7 a.m. in Korea. After that point, the challenge to stay awake until we reached the hotel in Seoul began! I hope it works -- fingers crossed!

Staying active on long flights

I love long plane rides! For some reason, I find them very relaxing and fun. I keep myself active as much as possible: walking around the plane, watching a movie or two, stretching inbetween the aisles, playing a game with Kori, jumping around and dancing in the open space by the bathrooms! To me, it is very helpful to constantly be mobile, because once we get off the plane, I don't feel as stiff and when I get to the final destination, I've worn myself out quite a bit! :)

Our final flight

In Tokyo, Kori and I met up with Josh Farris and his coach, Damon Allen, for our final flight into Seoul. Josh and I kept laughing at each other because we both were so out of it and tired!

When we landed in Seoul, we met up with an awesome man from the LOC (local organizing committee) who drove us to the hotel where we received our room keys and got credentialed for the event! We were so exhausted by that point that I left the credential area without my passport, and he left without his credential! Luckily, the people working noticed and got our attention before we had gone too far. So, the moral of the story is: When tired, take the time to triple check!

Tomorrow's preview

All four disciplines have their first day of official practice ice! Everyone from Team USA was scheduled to arrive by last night, but Madison Chock, Evan [Bates], Jean-Luc Baker and Kaitlin Hawayek's flight got canceled from Michigan, so they won't be getting in until tomorrow! But, if you are following them on Twitter (@Evan_Bates, @Chockolate02, @Jeanlucbaker, @Kaitlinhawayek), it looks like they are staying positive and making the best of the situation together. By tomorrow night, the whole team we will be reunited!!

Good night from Seoul!



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