

Report IMGE 2016 18th Oct – 6th Nov 2016

(18th – 21st Oct ~ Training Camp; 22nd Oct – 6th Nov ~ IMGE Tour)

On Tuesday 18th October 4 of the 5 members of the Australian Mounted Games team headed off to the airport to begin one of the most amazing experiences Pony Club has to offer. When we all arrived in Victoria the people who had been to Prince Philip National Mounted Games had a quick catch up and then an introduction to our 'unknown' member. The team consisted of Amanda (George) Mills (Queensland), Christopher (Chris, Patsy) Paton (Victoria), Annie Herzer (Western Australia), Teresa (Nigel) McCallum (Northern Territory) and Laura Chalmers (Tasmania), along with team manager Anne Cotton and Coach Tim Moreton.

We then headed to Werribee National Equestrian centre and Werribee Pony Club grounds, which would be our campsite until Thursday night. Tuesday was our get to know each other day and chill out and catch up on sleep as the other states/territories had different time zones.

On Wednesday we commenced training for the games, we were lucky enough to source 5 ponies which were also being used for the competition to practice with. We ran through all the games multiple times working out orders and rules and what type of ponies would suit each rider. Later that afternoon we had a change in scenery by having a crack at a show jumping fun day with our little games mounts!

Thursday was our 'competition run through day' where we planned on running through all the games once perfectly and the way we would perform them on competition day. This day however resulted in one of our members having a trip to hospital with a badly split lip! Our Friday didn't go as planned as we said goodbye to Teresa and Anne early Friday morning as they headed into Melbourne for further treatment. Those who remained headed into Hoppers Crossing to check out Aqua Pulse and the Pacific Werribee Shopping Centre (shame Anne wasn't there to go wild). We then headed back to base camp to say goodbye to our amazing ponies and pack up to head to Melbourne for the night. Come Saturday we headed down to the South Wharf DFO to kill some time before the other teams arrived. After a couple of hours shopping we headed to our accommodation a.k.a the North Melbourne YHA. Here we met up with the UK and US teams before heading down to the Queen Victoria Market. Now I'm pretty sure you could ask anyone who witnessed the food on the first night what they had eaten and they would only be able to answer with either fish or chicken that was inedible unless you were Australian and coated it in tomato sauce, but then again we only managed to eat about 3 mouthfuls.

Sunday we headed out towards Halls Gap where we would be staying for the next couple of days. We stopped briefly at Ararat Pony Club grounds to show the other countries how Australian pony club rallies run. Here we met up with Team Canada and after a quick vaulting demonstration continued our journey to Halls Gap.

Each day at Halls Gap was fun-filled with an amazing view. On the Monday we split into two groups and went for a walk up the Grampians while the other group rock climbed and abseiled. We then all headed back for lunch and swapped over for the afternoon. Monday night was filled with card games and ice breaker games these were interesting, with one game resulting in an Australian gang up to take the other teams out!

Tuesday morning we were off again half the group going kayaking and the others doing another walk. We again met up at lunch time and swapped over. After we had finished these activities we headed up to another viewing platform within the Grampians.

Wednesday we packed up and headed back to horrible food and the city, making a stop at Ballarat for lunch. Dinner that night was dried rice and slop which Tim decided needed more flavouring by adding chocolate sauce to his rice thinking it was gravy (he then stated it was to moisturise the rice and add flavour).

The next day we headed down to the MCG for a tour and to check out the sporting museum, sadly we were unable to have a full tour as the Sheffield shield was on and certain areas were restricted. After going around the MCG we headed down to Bourke Street to do a spot of shopping.

On Friday we headed back down to the market for a little while before heading to the aquarium. After our visit there we headed back to the YHA to meet up with our billet families. I along with Lexi (Canada), Olivia and Dani (US) and Caroline (UK) were lucky enough to be hosted by the Rodger family. We were definitely the luckiest people as they had a pool, spa, 5 min walk to the beach and amazing food!

Saturday was the day of our warm up competition where all teams were split up. This was a day for countries and people to learn how to play the games for the competition and get to know the ponies. It was also made a bit of fun by making it a scoring competition. At the end of the day the placings were; 4th – Team ‘Australia’, consisting of Christopher Paton (Aus), Teresa McCallum (Aus), Natasha McKee (UK), Virginia Carpenter (US), Shalom Ledger (Can) and Tim Moreton (Coach); 3rd – Team ‘Canada’ Caroline Barber (UK), Molly Robinson (UK), Jaycee Blythe (US), Lexi Vahey (Can), Amanda Mills (Aus) and Nikki Robinson (Coach); 2nd place – Team ‘USA’ Annie Herzer (Aus), Shayna Dyrland (Can), Savannah Weber (Can), Dani Drbal (US), Aidan Doud (US) and Cathy McLeod (Coach) and in 1st place – Team ‘UK’ Owen Davies (UK), Laura Chalmers (Aus), Danielle Henderson (Can), Olivia Owens (US), Hannah Thompson (UK) and Allison Bell (Coach). After the competition everyone headed back home with their billet families and for the Rodgers group we had a well-deserved trip down to the beach.

Sunday was a free day to do something with the billet families. My billet family along with Annie and Teresa’s billet families headed out towards Healesville to go to Hedgend mazes, where we spent the day throwing boomerangs, going through mazes, playing mini golf and having a couple of rounds of laser skirmish. After our couple of days of freedom we returned to the bus Monday morning where we commenced the tour with a good old bus trip down to San Remo and Philip Island. At Philip Island we visited a Koala sanctuary and a farm where we saw demonstrations of milking a cow, shearing a sheep, whip-cracking, which we had some members participate in and also a sheep dog demo. After this we headed back over the bridge to San Remo where we had a bit of down time and dinner before returning back to Philip Island to watch the little fairy penguins come in for the night.

On the day that the race stops a nation and we headed in the opposite direction! We went to Healesville Animal Sanctuary making a quick stop at The Yarra Valley Chocolate Factory to collect some goodie. At Healesville Sanctuary we watched an amazing birds of prey show and then showed the other countries more of our Australian wildlife.

Wednesday saw us headed to Sheik Mohammed's Thoroughbred Victorian breeding stud. Here we were introduced to a couple of his stallions, were shown around the breeding areas and the foaling paddocks. We also found out the Sheik Mohammed had never visited the stud but could control it all with his phone and that one of the paddocks is designated just as a helicopter landing one in case he ever decides to visit! We then headed to Nagambie to visit the Black Caviar statue and stopped for pizza for lunch.

On Thursday we headed out to do the tree top challenge, by the time we had finished it was time to head back and get ready for the official dinner, with Australia needing to make a quick stop in town to purchase some last minute belts! Our official dinner was on a river cruise and we were lucky to have Alistair Ling as DJ for the night.

On Friday we split into countries and went our separate ways for a chill out day before the competition. Us Aussies headed down to the Olympic ice skating rink to have a crack at that, luckily it resulted in no serious injuries. Later that afternoon we came together as a team for a last minute meeting and then chilled out and hit the sack pretty earlier. This was due to not only our early start the next day but also as we wanted to be well rested and performing at our peak. As we headed out to Whittlesea you could sense the change of emotions on the bus, everyone was a little tenser and you could feel the nerves. We had a bit of time when we arrived to check out the showgrounds and then we headed back to tack up the ponies and get ready for game time. When the games began it looked to be anyone's championship, however we battled on. The UK looked like they might've been heading home with the win, however the last two sets saw a change in the results as the UK started to stress mistakes started to be made. Lucky for Aussie however our teamwork helped us to encourage and support one another through the nerves which resulted in our coming away world champions! Saturday night was a night of partying and celebration and a night of fun! However Sunday morning had a few tears and lots of hugs and planning for a catch up.

I'm sure I speak for everyone involved when I say this is a lifetime experience and that we are so grateful to have been the ones selected to represent Australia and participate in such an amazing event. We were so lucky to have such a wonderful tour planned out for us and a brilliant pool of games ponies lent to us for this competition. To any young riders, who are thinking about applying for this or have an interest in games, go for it! It can take you anywhere in the world and give you the chance to meet people from all around the world who have the same interests as you. We now have contacts from all around the world who we could borrow ponies from in order to compete from all different parts of the UK, US and Canada. Our plans are to catch up in Ibiza or Bali or anywhere ...

I would like to thank Pony Club Australia and Pony Club Victoria for all their organisation of this fantastic event. Thank you to the pony owners who lent us such great, fast, amazing ponies. Thank you to Anne for being our Exchange Mum and to our wonderful coach Tim. Thank you to PCAT for supporting my nomination and my wonderful pony club, TPRC for encouraging me to take part in mounted games. Last but not least thank you to my family and friends who supported my trip.

Laura Chalmers

November, 2016



Presentation evening: Laura Chalmers (Tasmania), Annie Herzer (Western Australia), Christopher Paton (Victoria), Teresa McCallum (Northern Territory), Amanda Mills (Queensland)



Game faces: Teresa McCallum (Northern Territory), Annie Herzer (Western Australia), Christopher Paton (Victoria), Laura Chalmers (Tasmania), Amanda Mills (Queensland), Coach Tim Moreton