

Maude Burke Archers, Grade 4-6 Team Saskatchewan 2009 NASP Championship Experience – Louisville, Kentucky May 5-11th 2009

The Maude Burke archery team has truly experienced an opportunity of a lifetime. The students crossed an international border, proceeded through North Dakota, Minnesota, crossed the Mississippi River, into Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and arrived at 1:30 in the morning to Louisville Kentucky. Many sights were seen along the way and kids had their eyes glued to the windows numerous times.

Louisville has over 700 thousand people, close to Saskatchewan's 990 some thousand, so to say the least; the skyline was very impressive rolling into this city at night on our Prince Albert Northern Charter bus. An early 6 am wake up followed by a tour to Churchill Downs saw a lot of tired students and parents! The experience of Churchill Downs was superb for all.

We arrived at the Kentucky Exposition Centre at 11 am and quickly met up with our Saskatchewan friends from Canora, Yorkton, and surrounding area. We became instant celebrities....our kids were mauled by other teams as they saw our Canadian, Saskatchewan, NESD and RCMP pins and flags, and conversations were quickly struck and new friendships made. We had camera crews interviewing kids, parents, and coaches about our 30 hour drive and fundraising experience. People could not believe we drove this far and could not believe how generous our community and surrounding area were as they found out that we raised close to 40 thousand dollars in two and a half weeks to go on this 28 thousand dollar, 60 hour trip of a lifetime.

Pictures were taken of the flags on our sleeves, pictures taken with other teams as they wanted a picture by our Canadian flags and the day went on, with more handshakes and expression of welcome than we ever imagined; even the secretary of the state of Kentucky came over to personally welcome us!



To see the Canadian and Saskatchewan flag hung next to the American Stars and Stripes will be something we will not forget, nor the honor of having the Canadian Anthem played at the opening ceremonies. To say we were welcomed with open arms would be an understatement...our American friends were glad to hear the "wildfire" catching on north of the border!

We have never seen a facility that could come close to this magnificent exposition centre. 162 targets lined the walls as 324 shooters shot at one time. The arrows sounded like a thousand popcorn poppers going off at one time! Amazing to say the least. The adrenalin soon began to pump and the weary travelers kicked into overdrive.

A warm up at a 3-d target range and Saskatchewan chants got our blood pumping as we stepped up to the line. The 20 archers shot their arrows at 1:40 and 2:50 in the afternoon and had their sights set on showing we were there for a reason. At the Regina Provincials, we had a score of 2411, and we smashed that score with a whopping 2492.....a



huge increase in the archery scoring system. We were very proud. Our top score was an amazing 247 out of 300 points.

Our second day saw a tour to the Louisville Slugger Factory at 9:00 am, Six Flags Amusement park at 11, then to the archery shoot at 3pm where we saw all 4854 NASP shooters (now coined the largest archery shoot in history) and their chaperones converge in this one building. When Roy Grimes the president of NASP acknowledged Saskatchewan, we jumped up and cheered as did the crowd! What an amazing feeling! To be the only group mentioned when groups had come from Alaska and other distant states was very special and heartwarming.

The sad part of everything was that we had to leave our experience and new found friends and make our way home. The ride was grueling, 30 hours on the bus, with an overnight on the way down, but a straight through tour on the way back. In retrospect, we realize we should have considered taking one more day to break up the trip and enjoy it when we had come this far.

We have tired kids, but tired kids with memories that will last a lifetime. As one head official said to the kids...when you are 95, you are going to be able to tell your grandkids that you were the first Canadians to ever shoot in this event - you made it international - cherish that. WE WILL!!!

The NASP has been one the best things I have ever experienced that truly makes differences in the personal life's of students...they build self esteem, self respect, self discipline and see that dreams can become realities and the impossible is possible if you put your heart and mind to it... as we experienced with a team of grade 4-6 students that were able to attend the 2009 Nationals in Louisville Kentucky...thanks to all of you who helped make this possible!

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