

My World Junior Championships experience

I recently represented Australia to compete at the 2017 World Junior Championships in Italy. The build up of excitement and expectations for the event never seems to disappoint. Even just stepping onto the plane from Australia, I became quite nervous about what was to come in the following week.

After 28 long hours of flights and wandering around airports, we had finally arrived at our hotel in Riva Del Garda, a small town in the north of Italy. Walking into the competition hall the next day was a truly motivating experience.

To see the best players in the world training in front of you is incredible and inspiring. It truly shows you the high level of skill that can be attained if you train and work hard. This same atmosphere of professionalism and intensity from every athlete remained throughout the week and motivated me to do my absolute best.

For our first teams match we had been drawn up against Sweden. Playing against such a strong country first up originally seemed extremely daunting, however it soon became obvious that it was exactly what we needed. After losing 3-0, my-



self, alongside my teammates, realised that at such large global events all you can do is your best effort.

If you try your absolute hardest in every match you never know what could happen. This was further shown to us time and time again throughout the tournament watching players such as Truls Moregard make some of the biggest upsets of the year.

As I continued through the tournament, it became evident that although coming into the tournament the Australian side was one of the weaker teams, we had the ability to grow and strengthen as the week progressed. This was mainly due to being constantly surrounded by the world's best.

In this atmosphere it became obvious that simple improvements in my game such as service, service receive and basic consistency could dramatically improve my performance outcome on this international scale. I also believe this was the main reason I was able to win 50% of my matches and come back to Australia as a more developed player.

With this valuable experience behind me I am determined to continue improving in the lead up to the 2018 World Junior Championships in Australia. Overall, the experience to Italy was an extremely valuable experience and I am thankful to TTQ and TTA for the support they have provided.

By Benjamin Gould

