

Oceania Badminton Festival in New Zealand February 2010

From 18th Feb to 28th Feb, Invercargil in New Zealand hosted the Oceania Badminton Festival, where 5 events were played in quick succession.

The ball got rolling with the Thomas Cup and the Uber Cup Oceania Preliminary Rounds to establish which countries would represent Oceania in Malaysia at the prestigious biannual Thomas & Uber Cup Finals.

There were 5 countries battling it out for the men's and women's teams, consisting of Tahiti, New Caledonia, Fiji, New Zealand and of course Australia. After 2 days of tough competition Australia won in both the Men's and the Women's and hence will go on to Malaysia in May to mix it with the likes of China and Malaysia.



There was no respite for the players as the following 2 days saw action in the Robson Shield (Oceania Mixed Team Championship) and once again Australia came out on top of New Zealand, followed by Fiji, New Caledonia and Tahiti.

There was then a rest day for people to relax and unwind but a large group of officials, players and organisers made the day trip to visit the Adventure capital of New Zealand – Queenstown! What an amazing day it was and we were very lucky with the weather being almost perfect! The scenery was spectacularly awesome and the group saw people try out various things including shopping, riding on the gondolas, lugging and even bungy jumping! Yep I was amongst the crazy bunch that decided to give it a shot for the first time! It was quite an experience for me! It was more of a relief than anything else to have finally done it and I didn't quite jump but dropped 43m from a height of over 200m. We went for the body harness jump where we could take a run-up before jumping off the Ledge. Whereas the others in the group performed great stylistic jumps mine was a totally comical drop! It was about

3-4 seconds of freefall before the slack on the bungy tightened up and bounced me up and down a fair few times while I was thinking to myself that I had finally done it! It was totally safe and next time I go there I might go for the bungy off the bridge where you get to dip into the water as well or maybe I'll go for a sky dive or white water rafting!



The following 4 days saw the action on the badminton courts resume with the Oceania Seniors and Juniors Internationals. Ben Nie and Leisha Cooper from WA gave it their best and Leisha finished up coming Runner-Up in the Women's Doubles event and won the Women's Singles Plate.

I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience. Of course my role at the event was as an official and I helped out with the Lines from time to time but mainly focussed on assisting as an Umpire, and another personal achievement for me was to Umpire my very First Live Televised Final with a microphone and all ... thankfully I didn't say anything inappropriate by accident ;) ☺

By Jiten Bhatt March 2010.