



GLASGOW - DALIAN

格拉斯哥 - 大连

TWIN CITY EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

Glasgow School of Sport, Glasgow
Dalian International Tennis Centre, Dalian



Background

The Twin City Exchange Programme between Glasgow and Dalian has been developing and growing since the idea was first introduced in 2007. Since then we have had 3 successful exchanges between the cities, firstly in 2011 with a visit from National Coach Ms. Song Qinghua, which was arranged by the city of Dalian. This led onto Glasgow agreeing and organising a return visit, with players and coaches travelling to Dalian for an 11 day exchange experience in Dalian. This exchange took place in October 2014 and 10 players and 2 coaches from Glasgow School of Sport travelled out to Dalian for a badminton and cultural exchange between Glasgow and Dalian.

The third and most recent exchange has now taken place, from 7th – 17th March 2019. The format of the exchange was very similar to the exchange in 2014, where 2 coaches and 9 players travel to Dalian for 6 days of training and experiencing Dalian culture, combined with 2 days of culture in Beijing.



Dalian and Dalian International Tennis Centre

Dalian is a major seaport city in northern China and is a 70 minute flight from Beijing. With 6.08 million residents this major city is larger than Scotland. The official language is Mandarin and the city is governed by the Mayor and Dalian Municipal Peoples Government. Within the city, Dalian has a sports school similar to Glasgow School of Sport.

Dalian International Tennis Centre was the training venue for the exchange. The centre has 16 courts, 10 coaches, 100 players on the development and performance programmes which are led by Head Coach, Mr. Lee. Players train 6 days per week with the aim of progressing to Liaoning Provincial training in Shenyang which provides the pathway to Beijing and National Team training.

Players

Nine players from across S3 – S6 were selected by Glasgow School of Sport to attend the 10 day exchange programme. This included 3 players from S3, 3 players from S5 and another 3 players from S6. The players from Dalian had all started their badminton at the tennis centre and had progressed onto the Provincial Training Centre in Shenyang, where they all now live and train.

As part of the exchange programme, the tennis centre had arranged for some of their players to return to Dalian to train with our players for the duration of the exchange. The Dalian players were of a similar age to GSOS players and this led to a great experience both on and off the court for all, as friendships developed over the 6 day training experience.

Glasgow School of Sport Delegation 2019

Lena Robertson (Coach)
Angus Meldrum
Keryn Swan
Lewis Hart
Calvin Chan
Danny Robson

Josh Neil (Coach)
Logan Ireland
Erin Waddell
Jamie Gunn
Alexander McGarrie



Training

During our time in Dalian, we had the opportunity to attend on court training twice per day, with the players and coaches from Dalian. Each session was split into a singles or doubles session and the Glasgow players would complete one singles and one doubles session per day. The Head Coach for Dalian is Mr Li Bin and he had selected coaches from the Tennis Centre to come and work with our players, the singles coach was Liu Kai and the doubles coach was Kang Jun. Both coaches had been part of the Chinese National system and since retiring from playing, they have returned to coach at the Tennis Centre full time. From our experience of training in Dalian, the Glasgow players and coaches realized that one of the main differences between training in China and Scotland was the length of time spent on one individual practice, each routine was significantly longer than what our players were used to and they coped well with both the physical and mental challenges that that come with this type of training.

The two Glasgow based coaches that attended the exchange were Lena Robertson, Assistant High Performance Badminton Coach, Glasgow School of Sport and Josh Neil, Lead Performance Coach, City of Glasgow BC. Both coaches gained valuable experience and an insight into training methods from the best country in the world.

Cultural

After 3 flights and a long number of hours of travel, it was late afternoon by the time we arrived in Dalian. We were met at the airport by Chloe Liu, senior staff of European/African Division of Dalian Foreign Affairs Office. Chloe was the main contact for us before and during the trip and we had been working with Chloe for many months, to make all the arrangements for the exchange to become possible.

Chloe also introduced us to Glen, who was going to be our translator for our time in Dalian. Glen is a student from the local university and is studying to become a translator. Glen was with us all day, every day from the moment we arrived at the hall for training in the morning, until we returned to the hotel at night after being out for our evening meal.



After a quick check in at the hotel, we then headed over to the tennis centre for our welcome dinner. This was our chance to meet the Government Officials and Chinese players that were involved in making the exchange possible, the dinner was attended by the following Government Officials:

Mr Fang Zequn - Director European and African Division of Dalian Foreign Affairs Office of Dalian Municipal Government

Ms Chloe Liu - Senior Staff European African Division of Dalian Foreign Affairs Office

Mr Wan Weishan - Director of Dalian Sports Development Centre

Mr Yu Kehuang - Deputy Director General of Dalian Sports Bureau

Mr Yang - Director Dalian International Tennis Centre

Ms Yuan - Deputy Director of Dalian International Tennis Centre

Mr Li Bin - Head Coach of Dalian Badminton Team

At the end of our stay in Dalian, a cultural day was organized for us all. This included a demonstration in the art of Chinese writing, a talk on the history of tea in China and a chance to sample some tea too. There was also a bus trip around Dalian, taking in the local sights through the mountains and out to the coast, followed by a trip to the harbor and finishing off with some shopping.

Accommodation and Dining

As in the previous exchange in 2014, we stayed in the four star Xinghai Golf Hotel, Dalian. We had requested to stay again in this hotel due to its close proximity to the Tennis Centre and the shopping mall at Peace Square. Each morning we would have breakfast at the hotel followed by a 5 minute walk to the Tennis Centre for morning training. Lunch would then be provided each day at the Tennis Centre, where the Chinese players would also eat, this gave the players a chance to socialize in between training sessions. After lunch, our players would return to the hotel for some rest and then return to the Tennis Centre for afternoon training. Once the second session of the day had been completed, we would return to the hotel to get showered and changed before heading over to the shopping mall at Peace Square for dinner. Each night we went to a different restaurant and this is where Glen was extremely helpful, not only in helping us to understand menus and order our food but he was able to give us recommendations on which restaurants served the best type of food. We learned from Glen that hot pot and barbeque restaurants were very popular eating places with young people and this proved to be the case with our players too. After dinner, we would then visit the supermarket to top up supplies and then return to our hotel for the night, to be refreshed and ready for more training the following day.

Beijing

After 7 days in Dalian, the final part of our exchange was to spend 2 days sightseeing in Beijing, before flying home to Glasgow. Upon our arrival in Beijing, we were met at our hotel by Martin McDermott and Nicole Du, who then took us out for dinner to a local restaurant to sample some traditional Beijing food. Martin and Nicole work for the Scottish Affairs Office at the British Embassy in Beijing and they had helped us with arrangements for a hotel and transport to and from the airport, for our time in Beijing. Martin and Nicole had also arranged a tour guide for us, which was essential for our time in Beijing.



Our guides name was Fiona and she met us bright and early on our first morning at the hotel to take us to the Great Wall of China. The players were really looking forward to this experience and after a lot of stair climbing, we finally made it up and onto the Wall. After spending some time walking along the Wall, we returned to the souvenir area, where the players enjoyed the experience of bartering for souvenirs.

Fiona then took us to a local restaurant for a late lunch and then we returned to our hotel. We were fortunate that our hotel was close to the Silk market and again the players enjoyed the shopping experience at the market. On day 2 and our final day in Beijing, we went on the train to Tian'anmen Square and also a trip to the Forbidden City. We then went on the bus to visit a Peril market and also a food market, where some of the players were brave enough to try some of the local delicacies. We then headed back to the hotel and had one last visit to the Silk market, followed by some dinner and then we were ready to start our long journey back home to Glasgow.

Report by Lena Robertson

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