

## A time to make friends – the World Schools Debating Championship in Wales 2006



Our trip to Wales consisted of flying to London and then getting a coach from Stanstead Airport to Cardiff, Wales.

Our flight was very early and we had decided to meet at the airport at just after 5 o'clock in the morning. During our flight we prepared our debates, chatted or tried to sleep a little.

Our arrival in London was not the end of our journey. We had a long and tiring 5-hour coach trip to look forward to.

We arrived in Cardiff, the capital city of Wales, and were driven to the place we were to call home for the next ten days. We received a bag full of goodies and all the important documents like the draw, the timetable and diverse tourist guides for Cardiff. We also received badges with our name, country and status in the tournament e.g. debater, judge or observer and last but not least we got the keys to our rooms.

We were staying in the student hostel complex of Cardiff University. Each team had its own flat of 6 rooms with adjoining toilets for the five team members and the coach and a kitchen in which we spent long nights in last minute preparation for the debates on the next day.

On the day of our arrival we watched the Football World Cup match between Germany and Italy. We were met with an euphoric atmosphere in the hall, which was divided between Germany and Italy fans from around the world for the next 120 minutes.

The next day there was a whole range of activities consisting of a football tournament to a treasure hunt in the city of Cardiff.

The debating event started in the evening with an opening ceremony in one of the theatre halls of the City Hall. There were different performances including speeches, music and singing by prominent organizers, musicians and vocalists.

The debates started on the following day with rounds 1 and 2.

Team Germany didn't have such a good start on the first day, but we were optimistic and would do our best to win the debates on the following day.

On the next day our optimism was rewarded with six judges and two unanimous wins to our name. In the evening we enjoyed a Welsh food buffet consisting of various Welsh specialities.

After those tiring days, we had earned ourselves a morning of rest, which was followed by a trip to the BBC studios for a very special event: debaters discussed various topics with regional politicians. Of course there was a great deal of participation from the side of the audience, which consisted entirely of debaters and coaches, in form of points of information.

Early the next day it was time to get ready to go for some debates again. The day started with a tremendous win and ended with a bit of a

disappointment in form of loosing an impromptu. But again we kept our spirits high and were proud of a good outcome of four judges that day. In the evening we watched the final of the football world cup that was followed by a karaoke event, which was a great success.

The last day of the preliminary rounds came, and we were ready to face the two debates, which would have decided on our advancing to the octo-finals. At the end of two rounds we were left empty handed with no judge to our name.

In the evening we met all the teams again for the break night in Cardiff Bay. All our disappointment seemed to vanish in the fabulous atmosphere. To our surprise we were told that a locally famous rock band was going to perform for us, which turned out to be quite a noise. The sensitive ears of our fellow debaters led to a quick emptying of the hall. Outside, the debaters socialised or sang their own songs for their entertainment until one of the organisers came to fetch us for the results.

The following days we spent watching the debates and enjoying the time we still had with other teams.

On the last day of the debates, Australia beat Ireland with a split decision, winning the tournament.

The closing ceremony took place in the evening with the prize distribution and teams exchanging email contacts. The day ended on the dance floor where the debaters once again proved, that debating wasn't the only thing they were good at. The Worlds finally came to an end and the teams prepared for their journeys home.

It had been a fantastic experience for all of us. We had made many new friends from all over the world and hope to keep in touch with them. We might even meet again at other competitions.

By Ahsan Alvi and Mohsan Alvi