Are you Prepared?

It’s game time. After working hard on the range, focusing on your mental training, and sweating it out in the gym, you’re ready to travel to the big event. Are you ready for anything? Are you ready for inclement weather? What about equipment failures? Lost housing reservations are also a possibility. Don’t worry – I’m here to help you prepare for the unforeseen.

First, when packing your suitcase have you researched the weather of your future match site? For example, while Texas is typically warm and sunny, you may encounter rain and gusting wind for your match. Prior to leaving, take inventory of your clothing layers in order to be comfortable at different temperature levels. Be sure to pack light layers so you can dress comfortably according to the temperature and weather conditions. Have you trained in your cold weather gear or various layers? Before leaving for the trip, practice in different gear a round or two to gain a feel for what will allow you to perform at your usual level. The sweatshirt you think is warm and toasty may be too thick to allow a proper gun mount or movement.

Make sure to consider all the elements – rain gear and waterproof footwear is helpful for blocking the wind in the cold, sunscreen is always great for skin protection, and never trust the forecast. For example, one of my first international matches was in Cairo, Egypt. The forecast called for dry, hot weather the entire trip. I traveled later than my teammates and was fortunate to be on the receiving end of a phone call to bring warm clothes and rain gear. We experienced a once-in-decade cold front! Needless to say, I was more comfortable than my teammates who had not packed for cold weather.

Another obstacle to consider is how to clean your equipment after a rainy match. Ask the hotel front desk for rags and they will be happy to give you towels that have already been ruined – do not take the towels from your room. If you are unable to carry oil or cleaner in your luggage, then put an oily rag in a zip-lock bag in your gun case. Sometimes travel security will not allow you to have an aerosol can in your luggage. Another suggestion is to arrange with your teammates to assemble tools and liquids for the cleaning process, so no one has to bring everything.

Now that both you and your gun are ready for inclement weather, what about a back-up plan for faulty equipment? If your equipment were to break on a trip, would you be able to fix it or would you hand it off to someone else for repair? As a precaution, it would be wise to look up both a reputable gunsmith and general store in the area you will be shooting. Another idea is to arrange to use a teammate’s gun should anything occur with your own; talk to your teammates and discuss a plan that solves potential equipment issues.

Housing issues are possibly one of the most difficult to alter and anticipate. Given the number of athletes in a competition, the hotel will likely be full, so make sure the room you request meets your needs. Call the concierge or look online to see where in the city your hotel (and room) is located. If your accommodations are near nightlife, you may want to find new housing to ensure a restful sleep or be sure to pack earplugs and/or your iPod.

Don’t neglect your own personal health and well-being. If you take any medication, be sure to have an adequate supply for the duration of your trip. Also, are there any factors at your destination that may cause health issues? If so, don’t forget to tell the coach or team leader and educate them on how to be of assistance in the instance of an emergency. Make sure to research the local cuisine to uncover any foods that you may be allergic to or generally dislike. If either is the case, then pack extra snacks such as granola, jerky, peanut butter, canned meats, and other travel-friendly items.

These are just a few obstacles to think about as you prepare for a trip. There are many more issues that may arise, but hopefully some of these topics will help you think ahead to other potential issues. Ask a teammate who has traveled before for his or her tips; we are all willing to share our experiences and others may have unique solutions for addressing difficulties.

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Connie Smotek

Shotgun