

NL 18-1 & 18-2 travel to Italy

The Northern Lights 18-1 & 18-2 teams will be traveling and competing in Italy from March 28-April 6. They will be spending the first few days sightseeing in Rome, Florence, and Venice. After that they will be competing in a tournament in Pordenone Italy (18-1) and Falconara (18-2) with Junior teams from around the world.

Tournament Link for Pordenone=<http://www.memorial-cornacchia.com/public/eng/storia.php>
No link available for Falconara

March 29 - Arrival to Rome
By: Jordan Hinkle & Kathryn Gaydos

[Pictures from Day 1](#)

Today was a very long day. We left Minneapolis at 3:15 pm on March 28 and arrived at the Amsterdam airport at 6:10 am on March 29. The flight was long but movies helped pass the time. We sat in the Amsterdam airport for a few hours, which gave us some time to look around and stretch our legs (or take a quick nap on the hard floor). We departed at 9:30 and most of us slept for the next two hours until we arrived at about noon. We were finally in Italy! Many of us were excited to see the green grass instead of dry, dead scenery. We met Curt at the baggage claim and we all drove to the Olympic center. We ate lunch and then had time to take a nap for an hour and a half. At 4:15, we began our voyage to Rome by walking to the train station. We rode the train to the plaza and then walked to the Trevia Fountain and the Pantheon. We also had some time to shop before dinner. Afterwards we walked off our dinner for a bit, then we returned to the station to catch another train back to the Olympic center. We had many laughs and great times, which included being chased by Italian vendors, getting Chad to wear a scarf, and Emily Holte getting married to her Italian lover, Gipetto. All in all, we had a very full and tiring day.

March 30 - Coleseum & Forum & Match #1
By: Mollie Geske & Christine Bielski

[Pictures from Day 2](#)

Ciao! And Hola! We just got done eating dinner with the National Italian team and found that they understood Spanish more than English so we finally put our skills to use. FANTASTICO! While we spoke to the team in Spanish, Mollie asked her if she knew who Lady Gaga was and the girl said yes, "is she a man or a woman?" Haha! We started the day off around 9 am and headed to the metro and then to the Coliseum; the metro was very shady. Sooner than we knew it, the Coliseum was right before our eyes and was AMAZING! With the help of our tour guide, Antonio, we learned many interesting facts concerning Ancient Rome. Most of us racked up over 200 pictures today and are unable to put our cameras down and the only reason some of us put our cameras down was because the batteries died. ☹

Next we headed over to the Palatino which is where the royal, upper class, and emperors lived back in the day which was crazy! His property was bigger than the town of Chanhassen. Most of the city and houses were underground and excavations took place everywhere (only 30% has been excavated so far). We saw the place where the founder of Rome, Romulus, was killed, and we also saw the building where Cesar was cremated which was abundant with flowers. We saw the Forum which had temples and ancient shopping malls and it was crazy to imagine the city at its prime.

After we said ciao to Antonio, we separated and conquered the city of Rome. We two, Lauren, Kruegs, and Dee found an amazing, little, authentic sandwich bar with many goodies inside! Us two ordered a fresh pannini, a warm cappuccino, and Kruegs, Lauren, and Dee had gelato. By the way, we enjoyed all of these purchases while sitting down at the Trevi Fountain! YAY! We then trekked back to the Olympic Training Center and had 20 minutes to trek! Christine asked a guy our age if he knew where to go to get to the train station (in Italian, impressive), and he said he did not help tourists! His friend also did nothing to help us at all. After we had some down time and organized our purchases from shopping (don't worry, we got you good stuff ☺), we then headed over to play the Italian Junior National team. We all now have much more respect for what these girls do... We lost all four games but definitely put up a fight and will only get better. We all just showered up and are going to head back to our room now and paint our nails! Ciao amigos!

Editor's note: The 18-2's also played tonight. They played a very good match against the Italian Youth National team. These were girls that are ages 15-17. They are a very physical team with quite a few of them 6'2 - 6'4 tall and very fast arm swings. The 18-2's lost all 4 sets, but never gave up and played with a lot of enthusiasm.

March 31 - Vatican & Match #2

By: Mel Melville and Natalie Walseth

[Pictures from Day 3](#)

So today we woke up very early and Mel, Danielle, and Natalie were late.. OOPS! But we took the Metro to Plaza De Popollo, from there we took another Metro train to Ottaviano where we entered the Vatican City. We walked around a large wall and went through security and finally made it to the beautiful paintings and ceiling of the Vatican Museum. We walked around through the Vatican and entered the Sistine Chapel where we took in the Amazing work of Michael Angelo. We stared at the awesomeness of the ceiling and walls of the chapel for a solid half an hour until continuing our tour. From there we made purchases at the Vatican gift shop and made our way through sculptures and modern art.

Then we waited in the wrong line to get into St. Peter square. But no worries.. it was just because the Pope showed up. WE SAW THE POPE! He was in a little tiny bullet proof white car. And Ellen's dad got a picture of the back of his head... Awesome. Then we rushed around to the entrance gate of St. Peter's square to wait in line to get into the Basilica. So we just found out we walked about 11.5 miles today. HOLY BUCKETS! Totally worth the pain though. ☺ Once we

went into the Basilica we took lots of pictures and saw where St. Peter was buried. It was beautiful. BELLA!

Then we walked back after eating a terrible lunch from a street vender. It was rigorous and we had to played a 4 game match right after we got back. No naps for us today. After our match we all headed back into the city of ROMA! And we trekked around on our own and shopped and had lots of Gelato. Then we came back and went to bed. CIAO ROMA!!!! Love Nat and Mel

Editor's note: The 18-2 team played the Italian Youth National team again this evening. Once again they played a very spirited match. They lost the first 3 sets, but got better with each set. In set 4 the Italians had only their younger kids playing and the game was very exciting. It went to 33-31 with the 18-2's managing to win it. The Italians are a very good team, and playing them was lots of fun. We would like to Thank them for playing Northern Lights and wish them much success in a different tournament that they will be attending this weekend also. [Video clip of 182 playing](#)

April 1 Rome - Falconara and Pordenone

By: Amanda Hillyer

[Pictures from Day 4](#)

Today we got up early and headed to the train station to go to Falconara. There our tour guide, Tim, had to leave us to go to Spain and we met our new guide, Federicka. We ended up with a great spot on the train, we had six chairs that faced each other with tables, and a bunch of us got to play cards. After we got into the BEAUTIFUL Italian country-side- and got used to our ears popping every time we went into a tunnel- a lot was accomplished. A bunch of us slept- its amazing how tiring it was to tour and play- those who brought it got homework done, and overall we like trains!!

Once we got to Falconara we loaded into two vans and headed off to our hotel on the Adriatic Sea. After about an hour ride we could see the gorgeous sea and soon got to our hotel, ate and found our rooms or, for lack of a better word, cabins. Each houses 5 girls and has two rooms and a futon, a kitchenette- not that we would ever use it- and a small bathroom. Yes, one small bathroom for five girls..YIKES!! Eventually we went to play, we had two games back-to-back and won the first and lost the second.

On the way home one van had to stop and get soap because the hotel/resort didn't have any...weird... and eventually we all got a late dinner complete with gelato!! Afterwards my house found out that we had no hot water to shower with. Kat and Rachel had showered before dinner and Kat got about 90 seconds of scolding hot water before it turned to ice, then Rachel had to shower in ice the whole time and the same thing happened after dinner, it's a good thing we know how to take fast showers. In the other house they found that they had a little hot water but no water pressure. Fortunately we think that the problems have been solved and hope for smoother sailing tomorrow night.

Editors note: The 18-1 & 18-2 teams split today heading to different parts of Italy. 18-1's took the train to Florence for a 4 hour break/sightseeing time and then continued on to Pordenone which is North of Venice. They will visit Venice on Friday, and then start their tournament on Saturday. 18-2's went to Eastern Coast to a town called Falconara and started their tournament on Thursday afternoon. Today's journal is written by the 18-2 team.

April 2 Falconara and Pordenone
By: Rachel Finkbeiner

[Pictures from Day 5](#)
[Video clip of 182 playing](#)

A quick note for my family: Yes I am still alive and well. So far I've only forgotten my toothbrush, almost got hit by a mo-ped, walked into the men's public restroom in Rome, tripped over a steel barrier, and had a block from Lynette hit me in the eye causing me to black out. Not too shabby for five days. ☺

So this morning we have come to realize the hard way that Italians don't eat breakfast. For some weird reason here, a crossaint and coffee is much more satisfying then pancakes, French toast and cereal. The team consensus is that Italy needs a Perkins ASAP!

Today we played in this dome place that I like to call the Marshmallow. It's hot, and it reminds me of camping due to the fact none of the bathrooms contain toilet paper, so we have resorted to carrying toilet paper in our bags and passing the roll around when we use the restroom. Our first game went really well. We played a team...from Italy (I don't remember the team names, I go by jersey color) But we played super intense and energized and won all three games. Note: Here you play three games to 25. You don't win or lose a game, if you win you get a point. So we started the morning with three points.

After the game we took a walk up to the Basilica de Loretto, a very well known church in Loretto. According to catholic legend angels came and pulled Mary's house with ropes to the place of this basilica. Note: this walk to the Basilica was about as uphill as you can go on like a 90 degree slant. The church was gorgeous, the ceiling decorated, marble statues, gold trim. It's honestly hard to describe it; I'd recommend googling for pictures of it. Due to the fact it was Good Friday Kat and I took the time to pray. ☺We were considering going to penance there, because they had tons of priests there, but I was too afraid my only speaking English would offend them. Oh then after visiting the church Curt bought us Gelato!!☺

We then returned back to our girl scout camp style "Villas" and chilled. Amanda and I walked to the sea, which is twenty feet away from our room. It's really pretty and blue, just like the Caribbean. (My thought is we should shower in the sea, because it can't be any worse then taking a cold shower, which because I'm writing this I'm missing out on all the hot water for tonight. ☺

Match two, was hot and slightly frustrating. We fought to the end but we lost all three games. Match three was much better. We won one out of the three games. The team is playing good. We

have our ups and downs, but we don't give up. We've been sweating a lot and working hard. ☺ So overall we finished the day with four points, and we're in the gold for tomorrow.

Well that's all I have for now. (the adults here are having a great time, and loving the wine) Our Italian speaking skills are getting slightly better... The plan is to win tomorrow ☺ Ciao! Buona Sera!

<3 Rachel

Editor's note: The 18-1 team spent the day in Venice today. They got back to the hotel around 4pm and went to the Opening Ceremonies for their tournament. They will be playing 3 matches on Saturday starting at 11am.

April 3 Falconara and Pordenone
By: Brittney Barren

[Pictures from Day 6](#)

Today we woke up and had another wonderful breakfast of croissants and nutella ha ha we then headed off to play our first match against the number one seed in our pool play. It was our semi final match and we were all sore and very tired. During the first game we were keeping up with them and were playing like ourselves. It was a very fun and exciting game, but unfortunately we got gypped by the refs on a bad call. It was clearly passed outside the antenna by like two feet by the Italian team and the ref didn't call a thing. Even after the match one of the parents came up and commented on how many of the calls the ref was making were against us. Anyways, during the second set we tried our hardest but couldn't pull a win out.

So we then had a hour break where the girls sat around and listened to their I-pods or slept. Curt brought us strawberries and goodies ☺ We chowed those suckers down in a heartbeat. Soon enough we were back out on the court and playing our second match. We competed with the Italian team in the first set but lost 25-19. In the second set we battled like there was no tomorrow and pulled out a win; 27-25. During the third set the girls put all their energy into the game knowing this would be the last game we would ever play together in Italy. It was a very close match all the way through but we lost 15-13. We all put in a valiant effort and enjoyed ourselves very much.

Tonight I believe we are going out to eat. I have no idea where we are going but I hope they have pizza. We have all been craving that for a while since we've been served pasta I think almost everyday we've been here. We are all exhausted and our hopefully looking to go home early and get a good nights rest. We miss everyone and wish to be back home, but are also enjoying the city and being together.

Peace out,
Britt

April 4 San Marino & Pordenone

By: Emily and Sami ☺

[Pictures from Day 7](#)

Happy Easter=]! Today we got to sleep in YAY! We were surprised to find Easter goodies outside of our tiny, dirty, grungy huts, compliments of Curt and the Mamas. They consisted of small chocolate eggs and a big fat kinder egg with a toy inside! Before breakfast we got all dressed up in our Easter best. We ate croissants...again...shocking. Then, we began our journey to San Marino.

As soon as we stepped off of the bus we discovered rain and freezing cold temperatures. It was 8 degrees Celsius to be exact. I think we all regretted trying to dress cute and springy=[. But we still enjoyed our free time to roam the countryside. We found nice souvenirs, and the people still stared at us Americans. They seemed to like us though, that was nice. We're getting sick of being gawked at everywhere we go. Some people are a little to friendly ha.

Tonight we will be going to the same restaurant as we did last night in a back ally...slightly questionable but good food. It's safe to say that all of us are homesick. We miss our families and friends, and most commonly our beds and home cooked meals. Tomorrow we're going to Venice on a 4 and a half hour train hike. That'll be rough but well worth it! We're hoping to leave Curt behind so he can stay with his new love the female ref. Precious.

Happy Easter! We all miss you but will see you soon!

XOXO, E and S=]

Editor's note: The 18-1 team went 2-1 yesterday in their tournament. This put them into the Championship bracket where they played against the Israeli team this morning. It went 5 games and the 18-1's lost in game 5. They will now be playing for 5th place.

18-1 Summary

Florence & Venice

By: Ellen Krueger

In Florence we went to see the Ponte Vecchio Bridge that was filled with shops that sold jewelry. It didn't look like many people were buying the jewelry but it was very pretty to see all of the shops. On our way to the bridge we saw Duomo. It was a huge church that was covered in paintings on the outside. The only people that went in it were Ellen S and Natalie. While they were in the church the rest of ate the most delicious pizza of the entire trip. They gave it to us in giant squares so we pretty much each had a fourth of a pizza. While we were eating it though, we got yelled at by a police man to not sit on the street?

The rest of the time we spent in Florence was consumed with the little shops and stands along the street. In Venice, we all ended up riding in a gondola even though it was a little more expensive the some of us would have liked. On our gondola ride we saw the house of Castinova. It was

cool being there because the roads are water and regular families were leaving their homes in boats instead of cars.

With a lot of luck we all somehow found our way to San Marco Square to take pictures in front of the bell tower and the basilica. After that we had lunch at a little shop where Dee and Mollie got pepperoni pizza that was topped with French fries. We all enjoyed looking and shopping at the little shops with all of the brightly colored masks. Getting back to the train station was very difficult and we got lost about 5 times so we barely made the train. Over all, both of the cities were very beautiful and I am very glad that we were able to visit them.

18-1 Tournament Summary

By: Ellen Senf

Nothing submitted.

April 5 Venice

18-2's

By: Elyssa DeTorre

[Pictures from Day 8](#)

We got up early yesterday and went to the train station. It was about a 4 ½ hour train ride full of wardrobe changes and a game of ten fingers which always ends in some good laughs. We came in right outside of Venice and then took a crowded bus ride with creepy men into downtown Venice. We spent the day walking through town and looking around at the little shops. We got some huge slices of pizza and lots of souvenirs.

We met back up with Curt at St. Marco's square and headed off to dinner. Most of us got lasagna or some more pizza. Then as promised Curt bought us our last gelato in Italy ☺. After dinner we split up and voyaged around the alleys to look in more shops until it was time to head back to the bus.

On the bus we discovered that Chad could possibly be Jordan's father. They look alike! We took some family photos as we were heading back to the hotel. Instead of quant little bungalows we were surprised to find big hotel suites with warm shower water waiting for us! We ended the night with some good team bonding consisting of hair braiding and drawing tattoos on each other. A good way to end a perfect trip☺

Editor's note: The 18-1 team played their final match today in Pordenone. It was for 5th place and they played Germany. They won the match in 4 games.