

NL 18-1, 18-2, 18-Black, & 18-Red travel to Italy

The Northern Lights 18-1, 18-2, 18-Black, and 18 Red teams will be traveling and competing in Italy from March 29- April 7. They will be spending the first few days sightseeing in Rome, Milan, and Venice. After that they will be competing in tournaments in Pordenone Italy (18-1), Falconara (18-2), Milan (18-Black), and Verona (18-Red) with Junior teams from Italy and around the world.

Tournament Link for Pordenone=<http://www.memorialcornacchia.com>

No links available for Falconara, Milan or Verona tournaments

Day 1

March 30 - Arrival to Rome

By: Claire Ritchie & Amber Demenge 18-2

After our arrival in Atlanta, we all stuffed our faces with the last bit of American food before take-off around 6. The flight was over nine hours long; we were not mentally prepared for this. It started off good then the turbulence began and didn't stop for hours it felt like. Girls were getting sick and nauseated. It was a disaster. To top it all off the food was not so great. TIP: do not eat something that will not make you feel good, it will last awhile and there are few bathrooms. Finally it began to calm and we had a nice descend.

We had a bus ride to the hotel and got situated; the rooms are way different then what we expected but are cool. After we got ready, grabbed lunch at the metro, and took a short nap (I advise not to take one) then we took the metro to a church called Sans Pietro. There is a lot of architecture and statues. Next, we had a short walk to the Coliseum. It was gorgeous and don't worry you will find a selfie stick for a pretty good deal... multiple times... even if you already have one they still think you need one more. Then we went to the forum, which you will also see the emperor's palaces and the commoners housing/lifestyle. It was very interesting to physically be there and see the places of the old Roman Empire.

Later we took the Metro (train) back near our hotel where we were served dinner. We had multiple appetizers, such as bread, salad, and bruschetta, followed by main course. The main course consisted of cheese pizza, then

rigatoni, and some spaghetti noodles with some cheese on it. The food was amazingly delicious.

9:00 at night, it was a long unforgettable day, and felt refreshing to get back to the hotel, shower, and have a long nights sleep.

P.S. wear tennis shoes.

LOVE,
Claire and Amber (:

[Pictures for today](#)

[Claire, Sarah & Ciara at the Coliseum](#)

Day 2

Rome - Vatican

By: Rylee Sayler & Darla Drenckhahn 18-Red

Today, we got up and had breakfast in the hotel. There was a lot of pastries and bread. Then we took a bus to the Vatican and toured Vatican City. We walked around 3-4 miles today and viewed a lot of really cool historical artwork and sculptures. We got to go into the Sistine Chapel and the Basilica. When we were in the Basilica we lost Brooke for a little bit and spent a little while trying to find her, when all along she was with the 18-3's!

We had a lunch break for about an hour and a half, so we went to a Pizzeria and got pizza/sandwich, pop, and gelato for 8 euros! The gelato was very good!!

We have been asked about 100 times if we wanted a selfie stick since we have been here. We finally gave in and some of us bought some. We bargained from 12 euros down to 5 euros J.

The coolest thing I (Darla) saw today was a ceiling in the Vatican that was painted but it looked like it was carved out because it had such an illusion of being 3 dimensional. The coolest thing that I saw (Rylee) was probably the sculptures that Michelangelo made.

We learned what an obelisk is, by the way it's a big pointy pillar! Also we have ridden the metro quite a bit which is suuuuper crowded! We went grocery shopping today too for snacks for after we play. Now we are at the facility where we are playing a couple of friendly games which is going to be such a fun experience!!!

[Pictures for today](#)

[Some match footage of 18 Black & 18-1](#)

[Tina & Brittany talk about our 2nd day in Rome](#)

Day 3

Rome - Shopping day!

By: Emily Bialka & Alli Weiss 18-Black

Last night we had a 6 course meal at the local restaurant and after Curt took us out for gelato, we got back to the hotel around 11.

Today we got to wake up later than yesterday; we had breakfast at 8:30. Most of our breakfasts consisted of bread and Nutella or pastries which were very good! The weather in the morning was about 65 degrees and we headed out to the metro around 9:20.

We took the metro to Spanga which is where the Spanish Steps are. We spent a half hour at the steps taking pictures and then we headed to the Trevi Fountain, which was under construction so that was kind of disappointing.

Next, we walked to the Pantheon which was a huge dome filled with marble statues built almost 1800 years ago! We were then set free for lunch and shopping. We decided to shop first, we went into the tourist shops looking for good finds. A few girls on the team bought shirts that said "I <3 Papa Francesco". After shopping, we all went around to different restaurants. The pizzeria we found was very good authentic Italian. We ate pizza, calzones, and bruschetta. The meal was very cheap so we saved some of our money for gelato again tonight!

We met back at the Pantheon and then walked all the way back to the metro which took us to our stop at Termini. We made it back to the hotel around 1, in time to take a nap before we had to leave to play our match today. We left the hotel at 2 to play and that's where we are right now!

Hoping take a win from the Italians today!!! Later tonight we are going to have a pizza party with all of our teams and the Italian teams here.

That's all, Arrivederci! – Alli and Emily B.

[Pictures for today](#)

[Taylor and Emily at the Spanish Steps](#)

[Malissa & Emily on the Bus](#)

Day 4

Rome – Venice 181

By: Jordan Thompson

Today we started off by taking a three hour train ride to a town right outside of Venice. Once we arrived in the town we settled into our hotel and then took a short train ride to Venice. When we got there we got to split up and go explore the city for 5 hours.

I was with Callie and Lauren and we spent the afternoon looking at various shops. The shops had everything you could think of, for example Lauren got yarn to knit a headband and I got 4 pairs of nail clippers. The canals were gorgeous and just like you see in the movies! We took lots of pictures on the different bridges and got to see a ton of cool old buildings.

For lunch we had pizza that was about an inch and a half thick and the size of our face. We topped off lunch with gelato and a fresh fruit cup! For dinner we went to a cute Italian restaurant and had pizza, calzones, spaghetti, and chicken. Then after dinner Curt treated us to our second round of gelato! After a long day of walking miles and miles we went back to the hotel and turned in for the night.

Overall it was probably my favorite day of the trip so far! It was amazing to actually be in the place that you always see in the movies and dream about going to!

Rome – Falconara 182

Today we took a train from Rome to Falconara, which was about 3.5 hours. It was a beautiful ride, although going through the tunnels was a

new experience because our ears popped a lot.

Once we arrived, we took a van to the cute little bungalows and were happy to find we have free WiFi, and a filling lunch. Then we were off to the tournament.

We crunched both teams we played, winning both our matches in 2. The last team we played against was very enthusiastic and loved competing with us. We took pictures, learned some new words, and even showed them our handshakes.

We are off to dinner now (where there is a DJ and a dance floor) and are excited to play tomorrow morning!

Emily & Taylor

Rome – Venice - Milan 18 Black

After an early start, it was an enjoyable train ride to Venice. We met our new guide Frederique, too. She is very nice. We took the girls through some of the twists and turns of Venice bringing them to the Per Rialto. Then gave them instructions to travel in groups and off they went. One group had a nice sit down lunch with a view of the Per Rialto nearby and followed it up with a gondola ride. The other group also a nice lunch and decided to start earlier with their shopping.

Everybody made out pretty well with their purchases. Everyone had something to show. They all arrived on time back at the Ferrovia, (train station), without anyone getting lost. They all commented how much fun Venice was and wished they could have stayed longer.

We boarded our next train for Milan. We are staying in the dorms for the athletes of the International Training Center, where the Italian National teams train. They are not here because they have a break right now. We had a gnocchi dinner, my favorite, and then off to bed. Can't wait to see the Duomo and do some dream shopping tomorrow as we see the rest of Milan.

All are well!

Jeff

Rome – Verona 18 Red

The 18-Red team started their day bright and early. Breakfast was at 5:45 and from there we got onto a train to Verona. The team had a lot of fun on the train ride but it was clear they were still tired as they were being quite silly. Jen shared her dream of being known as Jen the Cannon Gannon while others played cards and tried to sleep despite all the noise their other teammates were making. We were greeted in Verona by our other tour guide Nace (pronounced not-say) and Lucia, a woman we met last year who helped our team with translating and sight seeing.

We played at a beautiful facility in the village of Quinto. The courts were high quality wood and the view of the mountains from the facility was amazing. We played a team from Verona for our first match. We started off really well but we weren't able to pull out the win. Our 2nd match went better for us. We won the first set and we came back from being down 5-15 to winning 25-23 to win the match. 1-1 for the day is a good start.

In between the matches, we had lunch at a local restaurant. We ate with team we played earlier. The players had a lot of fun talking and getting to know each other. There was a lot of laughter and smiles around the room. The players thought that was a really fun experience and are looking forward to meeting other teams.

Aside from learning about Jen's cannons, we also learned that Sydney H. is quite a social butterfly. She has been taking the time to meet new people and even made the day for a very young volleyball player by peppering with her and taking time out to get to know her.

Tonight, we had dinner at our hotel and now have some time to rest and get on the wifi. We play at 9:15 tomorrow morning. Tomorrow night, we will get to go into downtown Verona; everyone is very excited for that!

All is well here in Verona. Was a great day for team bonding and dancing in the streets (literally).

Ciao!

Joanna & Jenny

[Pictures for today](#)

Day 5

Venice - Pordenone 181

By: Elmo & Rebecca

We woke up (too early) this morning in Mestre, caught our train to Pordenone and immediately went to lunch. After lunch, we started window shopping and then made a few too many purchases. We inevitably made multiple trips to get gelato (thank you Curt).

We walked back to the hotel to check in and rested before the opening ceremonies. The opening ceremonies started at the fairgrounds. All 72 teams grabbed their nation's sign and marched from the fairgrounds into the main square of Pordenone. Mingling with the other teams was very interesting; we learned a lot about the way of life in Slovenia and Belgium especially. Once we got to the main square, each team was called up to the stage individually. When we were called up to the stage, everyone yelled extra loud for us and started chanting USA. The opening ceremonies were a very loud, exciting, fun experience.

After the opening ceremonies we walked to the fairgrounds with the Belgians for dinner. We had pizza and pasta (what's new?). We got to ride back in a bus thanks to Cory, our tour guide. Finally, we got our last gelato of the day and are heading off to bed. We miss everyone back a home, but are excited to play.

Falconara - 182

By: Emily C and Aulora

Hey guys,

We played volleyball today and it was really fun! I love volleyball its a good sport! We won our first two games bright and early and then got the afternoon to chill before our game at 7.

We explored the beach, took pictures, walked the sand and took naps! Maddie even went into the ice cold ocean and was successfully knocked over by a giant wave, sorry Maddie but it was quite hilarious!

Then it was time for our game at 7. We arrived at the gym and a men's team happened to be practicing. They were superhuman. We took a picture with them solely because of their athletic prowess (it had nothing to do with their gorgeous faces.)

We also won our match tonight! (another plus!) The team we played was duper scrappy and it was our first game that went to three sets but we got it together for the w!

Maybe there will be another disco party at the bungalows tonight!

Milan - 18 Black

By: Audrey and Malissa

Today we slept in, and got ready for a walk through the heart of Milan. We went inside the Duomo Church and a castle from the first royal family of Milan. We walked around Milan until 4 and then went back to the Olympic complex for a nap. Then we went out for dinner and celebrated Alli Weiss's birthday.

Tomorrow, we head for the mountains! It was another beautiful sunny day in Milan and are expecting clouds over the next few day, so we are happy to be going to play some volleyball.

Verona - 18 Red

By: Sydney and Jen

Ciao bellas & machos!

Day two in Verona started off with an early breakfast of croissants and warm milk. We then headed out to the tournament with our cute chauffeur ;) Our first match was a tough loss by a very good team from Naples. We then played another team with a very strong defense and fell just short of the win.

Even with these losses, we found the energy deep inside us to play a third match later that night and pulled out the win. Having such supportive teammates (and male cheerleaders: aka our chauffeur's) we played some very impressive volleyball.

After an exhausting day we finally went to dinner at 9 o'clock. The bus ride was entertaining as we sang (very off key) with the other Italian girls (It's a good thing they knew the song 'Call Me Maybe'). They then sang us their

National Anthem, and we sang ours. Next we arrived in downtown Verona with the beautiful stone buildings and cobblestone streets. As we waited to enter the restaurant we mingled with the Italians and gained a few followers on Twitter and Instagram. Being able to experience other cultures makes us realize how much there is in the world that we never get to see.

Next it was time for pizza, which seems to be a universal word everywhere we go. We learned the correct way to eat it which is by cutting it in four pieces and then folding it in half. Besides having a fun filled day of volleyball I think our team would all agree that the most exciting part was being able to get some ice cubes for our drinks at dinner.

Now it's time for bed so we can recharge and show them what were made of on the court tomorrow.

[Pictures for today](#)

[Allie turns 18 in Milan](#)

[181 in team town march](#)

[Callie & Jordan give us a summary of their day in Venice](#)

Day 6

Pordenone - 181

Falconara - 182

Darfo Boario Terme - 18 Black

Verona - 18 Red

By : Joanna

Bonjourno!

It is almost 2pm here in Verona and we are waiting to start our first and only match of the day.

I tried writing an update last night but fell asleep while writing; it was a

long day for us.

Yesterday, we had our first match at 9:15. We played a very good team and although we played very well, we lost in 2 sets. We then went to lunch with the other team. We had a choice of fish, veal, or cheese for our main course. After eating we took a little walk and Lucia showed us the house that her grandparents and her parents grew up in. She said that during the war, when food was being rationed, her grandfather built in some fake walls to hide extra food. Afterwards, we had another match that was scheduled for 2pm but didn't start until almost 3 because the ref was late. Again, we played very well but couldn't quite pull out the win.

We had planned to go into downtown Verona but were informed that we had another match at 6pm at a different location. That match went very well for us and we won in 2. It was the best we have ever played!!

There are several other teams staying at our hotel at at 830, three buses picked all of us up and took us to dinner in downtown Verona. We had pizza that was by far the best we have had here. Deliziosa!!

We walked around and everyone was in awe of how beautiful Verona is. It was midnight before we got to the hotel and we were all very tired.

This morning we went back into downtown Verona before lunch....it is very beautiful and full of history. Verona has 3 different walls that enclosed the city. The first was built during the roman reign, the next during the medieval period when it was occupied by the Germans, and the last one from the Renaissance period when Napoleon ruled the area.

We walked to see Casa di Guilietta which is the home of Juliette from Romeo and Julliette. We didn't do the tour of the home but took pictures in the courtyard. Darla, Gabi, Rylee and Big Mama (aka Anna) all got pictures with the statue of Juilliette.

The players really want to go back into downtown so we will go once we finish our match.

Ciao!

Journal by the Players

By: Emily and Brooke

Today we were able to sleep in a little bit! We went to downtown Verona to get some shopping in before heading to our final volleyball game. Our game ended with an ace by Darla to finish the 3rd set! We were all super excited to finish our Italy tournament with a fun team win.

After playing we headed back into the downtown area to visit some more vendors. We got Italian made scarves, gelato, strawberries and chocolate, crepes, and fruit cups. They were amazing!

We then headed to the closing awards ceremony of our tournament. It was so fun to walk to the center court when they called our name. Everyone cheered very loudly for us since we're Americans. It was fun to feel like celebrities for a couple minutes.

We had dinner at a small restaurant right outside Verona. It was delicious and we even got to have some french fries! After another full day we are pretty tired but definitely excited to head into beautiful Verona again tomorrow.

Ciao!

More from the 18 Red coaches later in the evening:

On Saturday we played our final match in Italy. We played a team that beat us on Friday. This time, we were the winners. Despite being tired, the team was able to play an amazing match winning the 3rd game on an amazing ace from Darla. We were surprised to find out we win as the score was 17-16...apparently there's a 17 point cap. We finished in 9th place and overall, everyone feels good about the progress we made during the tournament.

Lucia brought the team a giant chocolate Easter egg and a Colomba Pasquale cake which is a traditional Easter cake from the area. The other team also gave us chocolate rabbits. Yum!

After playing, we went back to Centro Verona (downtown). We did some shopping then went to the closing ceremonies which were held at an arena near downtown. It was a very long ceremony as they introduced all the teams; there were over 73 teams. We received another chocolate egg and

Easter cake. Looks like we will have to have a chocolate and cake party tonight!!

Tomorrow we will be in downtown Verona again then to Lake Garda for some more sight seeing. Some of our players and parents are going to attend a church service in the morning. Curt will be joining us in the morning and we are hoping to get the much talked about gelato from him.

Hope all is well in Minnesota. Ciao!

Joanna & Jenny

[Pictures for today](#)

[Julia & Grace talk about Yesterday's day in Pordenone](#)

[Some peppering & Dancing in the gym](#)

Day 7

Pordenone - 181

By: Abby and Olivia

(Read in a British accent) Once upon a time on our trip to Italy, we awoke to church bells ringing as it was Easter Sunday. After eating a hearty breakfast of croissants and cappuccinos, we set off to our quarter final match. At the beginning of the match, things were not looking very good for us, but really we were plotting to give the crowd a nice Easter surprise. We came back to win 3-2 in dominant fashion. After having some down time at the hotel, we returned to the gym for our semifinal match. Long story short, we lost but we played a gritty, skilled match against (shocker) an Italian team.

We finished our match around 8 and made it back to the hotel at about 8:32. Then, as expected, chaos ensued as we rushed to get ready for the tournament party that started at 9. We all had fun, and our arrival was met with plenty of "USA" chants from the other teams (let's be honest it was mostly guys). We got back to the hotel around midnight and were in bed by....a little while after that. We missed Curt because he was in Verona, so he probably owes us some Gelato since we won in 5, and played hard in the match that we lost.

The following morning (Monday) we had to be at breakfast at 7 in order to be prepared for our 9:30 match for third place. Our third place match was against a German team that we had already played against in pool play (we won that match 2-1). In our third place match we beat them 3-0 to provide a solid finish to our tournament. Italy has been a great experience. We have had some very dedicated Italian fans throughout the tournament and we really appreciated their support. They even asked for our autographs and gave us some gifts and a nice letter.

Tonight (Monday) we will attend the final matches for both the men's and women's tournament, followed by an award ceremony where we will accept our third place award.

(Summary)

Falconara - 182

By: Mady Pashbin

We had a great easter service in Loreto. A 2 hour nap/ride to San Marino was next on our agenda. It was quite a rainy day.

We explored the windy streets filled with shops and beautiful sights. Some girls bought hand bags, umbrellas, earrings, and other fun things. Gelato capped the end of our trip before getting on the bus for our ride/nap back to the bungalows.

Darfo Boario Terme - 18 Black

Verona - 18 Red

Ciao and Happy Easter!

This morning half of us slept in and the other half attended a fascinating church service that was quite difficult to understand.

The half that slept in drove into downtown Verona and met up with curt! Finally!! We then walked to a beautiful brick castle and enjoyed the architecture with beautiful Italian music in the background. At the end of the castle tour we met up with the church goers.

We then shopped for a few more hours (of course) downtown. The city was filled with families with their dogs and music. Curt then treated us to a

delicious lunch where there were more options... Not just pizza and pasta!!

We then took a 45 minute drive to the beautiful Lake Garda. We cannot describe the beauty of this location. Curt again treated us to gelato, and made our way to the lake. We were wondering how the scenery of the lake would be for us because we see them nearly everywhere back home. But this lake can't even compare to the ones in Minnesota. The water was so blue and surrounded the lake were tremendous mountains that took your breath away. Then to add icing to the cake, white swans were swimming near us, clearly looking for food. Surely, this place was one of the best to take pictures at. Team pictures and candid, galore. Lake Garda is definitely a paradise to remember.

We shopped there some more, because 18 year old girls can't go an hour in Italy without spending some euros. After saying goodbye to Lake Garda, we went back to downtown Verona to, you guessed it: eat dinner at a Pizzeria. It was a great way to end our time with Curtis.

We then collected our luggage from our hotel and took a van ride to Venice. But we always have fun with our Slovenian tour guides, Luka and Nace!! So tomorrow is our last day and we get to spend it shopping and relaxing in Venice. What better way to wrap up our trip than to spend it in a breathtaking city.

That's a wrap!!!

Love,
Dowson and Gabi

[Pictures for today from Verona](#)

[Jen & Anna talk about Verona](#)

[Rylee & Sydney M in front of the Arena](#)

[Jen shows how to eat pizza](#)