

December Camp in Tenerife

Although this camp is technically the last camp of 2017, in my mind it's the first camp of my 2018 season. For me the years calendar doesn't start in January, it starts as soon as my break finishes after the summers track season. So, 2018 has been in full swing for a few months now in my eyes.

Tenerife was the destination of choice for Athletics Northern Ireland's first team camp for the Commonwealth Games which take place from Apr 4, 2018 – Apr 15, in the Gold Coast in Australia. The Games gives me the opportunity to pull on a different vest than my usually Green, White and Gold. But it's one I am equally proud to wear, as I hope to represent Northern Ireland in the Commonwealth Games. (final team selection to be announced). So, I left the frost and snow and headed for warmer climate.

My stay in Tenerife was brief but a quality one none the less. Day one, I was straight into work, a 6am start from the house meant no morning run but once I had arrived in the hotel, chilled for an hour and stretching out the hip flexors after the 4-hour flight I was off for a 7-mile run. We had a chilled evening, dinner then an early night, ahead of a busy day two of camp.

The alarm was set for 7.30am alarm to allow time for a light breakfast before my track workout at 10am. As I started back a bit later due to a long track season this is one of my first full track sessions since the summer. And boy did my legs feel it! The seeds that are sown in the winter will be the summer harvest, so I put my head down and work hard (with thanks to Performance Director Jackie Newton who was on stop watch duty as I ticked down the laps). Session done, it was back to the hotel to get cleaned up and fed. Then a well-deserved nap! Then late afternoon, I tick off another couple of miles before dinner.



Day three, I stick to my routine with a light breakfast at 7.30am, then my morning miles at 9am along the quiet coast line. It's great being up before the

hoards of holiday makers meaning I get to run by the sea, a near impossible task later in the day. Second breakfast eaten (my favourite meal of the day), then I head to the gym for a workout. Post work out recovery shake and grub, then a nap before a rub out with the team physio.

Day 4 was my second session of camp. I usually have a few more days between sessions but with travel this week my normal schedule was adjusted slightly so I was up, fed, water and ready to go at 10am. Hill sprints and a tempo were on the cards and it's always interesting finding an appropriate spot to get your workout in when somewhere new. I try not to get too worked up about the situation, routes aren't always ideal but it's the effort in training that counts. So, adjusting my focus from pace to heart rate meant I was on target even though half the tempo was up hill! After food and a nap, I did my evening run then we had a team meeting on everything we needed to know about the Gold Coast:

1. It's going to be warm,
2. 2 to the delight of a few of the lads in the team there aren't many sharks

Then off for a team dinner in a local restaurant, steaks all round and the largest rack of ribs I've ever attempted to eat!



My final day on camp consisted of a morning 8 mile run and a gym session and a bit of yoga on the roof. A wee team photo and long flight back to the frost. I had a fun camp, I'm used to being away with the Irish squad, and although there are many familiar faces on the NI team there are some new ones, which is great to see. That's the fantastic thing about sport, you meet so many new people, and automatically have a bond. We can be from so many different walks of life but we all have a passion for our sport. Now it's back to base for me in Manchester with Coach, Steve Vernon before I return to Portaferry to spend Christmas with my family. Zero tan and a big smile as I look forward to my next few months of training.



