

Dear Jack:

I wanted to take some time before writing and commenting on our trip to Europe. To be honest, the 12 day trip went by so fast, it all seemed like a blur to me. I wanted to have time once we got back home to Dallas to sort out all that happened on the trip. I also wanted to take time to reflect and give you an honest opinion of the time we spent together with you.

All I can say is WOW!!!! When you and I started talking about this trip 18 months ago, I was skeptical. I had never been to Europe and quit frankly, you and I did not know each other that well. You promised me a trip of a lifetime. In this day and age, people who live up to these lofty goals are few and far between. I want to tell you that you far exceeded a trip of a lifetime. My family will have memories of the greatest vacation they have ever been on. And more importantly, my wife and I will always cherish the truly quality time we spent with our children. My wife will never forget the time we spent in Munich site seeing and shopping with our three kids – 3 teenagers voluntarily shopping and site seeing with their parent. Stop and think of that for a minute.

It has been two weeks since we returned. I am still getting emails, cards, phone messages and personal thank you conversations from the parents and kids on the team that went to Europe.

I do not know where to begin with the praises I have for my friend, Jack Holmes. So I will start at the beginning of the trip when you met us in Frankfurt, Germany with the bistro bus. What a great amenity! The bus sat 50 comfortably on the top level. Below, in the bistro, 16 or as many that wanted to cram into the booths, spent the time relaxing, playing cards, video games, you name it. There were 58 of us. We got into pretty good routine. The kids, and parents brave enough, sat downstairs in the bistro during the day, the parents at night after the games, claimed the bistro and it's fully equipped bar. What a great time!!!!!!

The games. We played three games in Germany, two in Switzerland and one in Austria. All of the arenas were first class with first class locker room facilities. All games started with a 15 minute warm-up, followed by three, 20 minute stop time periods, with an ice cut and 15 minute break between periods. The competition was fierce during the games. Afterwards the kids from both teams posed for photos and were all smiles. I want to relate one story to you – no not about the refs. However - I can know say from first hand experience, they are lousy in the United States of America, Canada and Europe.

Before every game, each team would line up on their respective blueline and the captains of both teams would exchange gifts. Then the names of each player would be announced to the spectators. We would then be treated to the playing of the U.S. National Anthem along with the National Anthem of the team we were playing. Our first game was in Bietgheim-Bissingen, Germany. During the ice cut between the first and second period of this game, one of the parents came up to me with tears in his eyes. He told me he had goose bumps all over his body watching his son and his team mates stand at attention during the playing of the U.S. National Anthem. He could not have been more proud of his son than right then! Our team is basically a group of house hockey players that through the years have taken our lumps while learning to play this game at a higher level of competition. Nine of the boys have been together for six years. No one would have anticipated six years ago we would be playing in Europe, representing the State of Texas and the United States of America. Thank you Jack!!!

The site seeing. We spent the first two days in Mannheim, Germany. From Mannheim we visited and toured a castle in Heidelberg, Germany. In Heidelberg we also had time to shop and have lunch in fantastic restaurants. Our next three days were in Bregenz, Austria. On the ride to Bregenz we stopped in a small mountain town in the Black Forest for lunch. From Bregenz we visited the local casino and visited a museum instead of the trip to the ski slopes we had planned. We had planned a day of skiing and snowboarding for the kids – but no snow. Europe was having a warm winter. From Bregenz we traveled to Salzburg, Austria for site seeing. It was in Salzburg when I found out what a GREAT trip we were on!!!

This story involves my 16 year old son. In Salzburg, you had arranged a tour of the sites. My wife and I are great Sound of Music fans and we wanted to see the city. Salzburg is also the home of Mozart and great, great history!! On this particular day, it rained. Sometimes hard, but it rained all day. Our tour was a walking tour. Because of the size of the group, we split into two groups with two different tour guides. Our son went in the other group with his friends. We did not see our son for the next 4 or 5 hours while we toured the city, shopped and ate lunch. When we did finally catch up with our son, I figured he would be all bummed out about the bad weather and the history lesson the tour guide gave. On the contrary. He said Salzburg was AWESOME! That it was the prettiest city he had ever seen. He was upset because he could not find us during the day. He was so impressed with Salzburg and the shops and the restaurants, he wanted to get back to the city and stay longer.

From Salzburg we traveled to Munich, Germany. A great city with great sites and great shopping. Like I mentioned earlier, the highlight of the trip for my wife. Also the highlight of the trip for many of the boys, dinner in the Hofbrauhaus. Many had their first beer – well actually there were three and one half beers in the mugs that the Hofbrauhaus used for serving.

Next stop Florence, Italy. We decided to skip Pisa and spend more time in Florence. A good decision. Florence is magnificent! A GREAT place to shop, site see and dine! Next stop Rome. You had arranged tours of the Vatican and the Colosseum. As great as the trip was up to the time of our visit to Rome – the tours of Vatican and the Colosseum – were the fitting end to a spectacular trip!!!! Words cannot express the beauty and brilliance on display in the Museums at the Vatican. The Sistine Chapel and St. Peters Basilica are beyond words – the Colosseum is spectacular! You could stand in the Colosseum and visualize the events that could take place today in this stadium.

Jack – I could go into detail on the trip to Rome because these are places I read about and learned about in school as a kid growing up in Detroit, Michigan. It never dawned on me that one day I would visit these sites. And if not for you, I would not have. I guess you can say the trip was a chance of a lifetime!

I could go on forever about this trip. I won't bore you any longer. You were there with us every day. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for what you have done for me, my family and my extended family - the Dallas Titans. I will never be able to repay you – except to know that you have my friendship for life.

Heck – my daughter that attends the University of Oklahoma has changed her major to Hotel Management. She says when she grows up she wants to be Jack Holmes.

No bigger compliment can be given!

Thanks  
Mike Kelly  
Head Coach Dallas Titans  
President  
Dallas Metro Hockey Association Titans