

MY DATE WITH HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE WILLIAM

On the 20th January 2010, I represented Western Sydney Academy of Sport at the bbq lunch held at the Botanical Gardens in honour of Prince William.

I got there on the day, there were security everywhere, police and police dogs everywhere it was very intimidating, but I had a special invite so I felt extremely honoured to walk through the security gates whilst the rest of Sydney had to stand behind the fences.

Kathryn Thew and I met up with Susan Pratley from the NSW Swifts at the entry so we all walked in together and picked up our name badges to identify to Prince William who we were, what we do, who we were representing and so on.

The majority of the invited guests had black lanyards around their neck, mine was blue?? I was thinking why is mine blue (there were about 10 blue to about 150 black lanyards) so I put it on and kept walking, until I was directed to the VIP table, I was then told that I was one of 10 guests to sit at the table with the likes of Ian Thorpe, Premier Keneally and wait for it.....PRINCE WILLIAM.

I was so excited, shocked...I don't know how to describe it, it was such an amazing opportunity to sit with them. I sat next to Prince William, he was walking towards me, the weather was so hot, I was getting so nervous I was sweating, nerves or heat?? I didn't know?

But I represented our Academy very proudly, I stood up and said, Hello Prince William, it is a pleasure to meet you, I'm Nicole Franks, from Western Sydney Academy of Sport, I play netball. From that point on we got talking about netball, my nerves calmed down, because he is the easiest person to talk to he is extremely down to earth, so we talked about netball, he said so will I see you in the Olympics Nicole, my reply was no, unfortunately netball is not in the Olympics, so he said he was going to do something about that.....so hopefully it will be in the Olympics in the future. I

told him about how the program develop us as players through training and seminars, and the types of competitions we play in, but also the friendships we develop with team mates and with the coaches that will never be lost. We then got onto talking about what other sports are in the academy, what it offers athletes etc.

Then we both discovered that we are both very bad at volleyball and had a giggle about that. So it was a very informal lunch, which was good because it allowed me to be able to just talk with the Prince as a friend.

As there were 10 other guests on the table from different areas, SES, youth workers, musicians etc, we only got a short time to speak to Prince William but I was just happy to get to speak to him one on one, I seriously didn't even think I was going to see him up close let alone speak to him!!

The best thing about getting to speak to him one on one, was he got to know about the Western Sydney Academy of Sport and what it offers to aspiring young athletes in our area.

Overall, it took about 2 days to sink in what actually happened because I was so shocked, it felt like a dream at the time because I couldn't believe how lucky I was, but the day is one that I will never forget, it was such an experience, one that does not come along every day.

NIC FRANKS.