

OLYMPICS: Couple plans for more Olympic celebrations

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so then we thought about Wimbledon or the U.S. Open and along the way we got onto the Olympics," she said. "That was it."

Tate operates Sisters Athletic Club and Aimee works as an administrator at Central Oregon Community College.

Tate is no stranger to the Olympics. He traveled to London in 2012 and Rio de Janeiro in 2016 for the Summer Games in order to witness his former athlete at Mountain View High School, Ashton Eaton, earn gold medals in the decathlon.

The couple arrived after the opening ceremony, spending two days in Seoul at the outset of the trip. With opening ceremony tickets going for \$2,400, Tate said that he wasn't that interested in the pageantry and the pomp and circumstance anyway. He was there to see elite athletes seeking Olympic glory.

"I went to the Olympics to see athletes suffer," he said.

"Our first ticket at Olympics was for the men's snowboard half-pipe, which happened to feature two guys from Bend, one competing for the U.S. and the other for Australia," said Tate. "We are sitting there and hear the announcer say 'And from Bend, Oregon, competing at Mount Bachelor is Ben Ferguson,' which was just super exciting."

Ferguson had a great performance, but fell just short of a medal in fourth place. Shaun White of the U.S. won the event.

"It was such a great way for us to start out we almost felt like it couldn't really get any better," said Tate.

Sitting in the bleachers surrounded by fans from all sorts of different countries gave the couple the true Olympic experience.

"Everyone is dressed up," said Tate. "The Dutch were decked out in all their orange gear and the Canadians, you could really see, they are all about the Olympics."

Another highlight came mid-week in the Super G, although they missed seeing Lindsay Vonn by just six minutes, assuming that she would not have been one of the first ones to go on her one and only run. But they did get to witness firsthand the most stunning upset of the Games in the same event when Ester Ledecka of the Czech Republic won the event by .01 seconds despite being ranked 26th heading into the final.

"We're not sure how that looked on television, but it seemed like it took her minutes to be convinced she had actually won the event," said Tate. "She just stood there for the longest time."

The Metcalfs are both recreational Nordic skiers, and say they can appreciate the pain the athletes endure, which is partly why the first tickets they bought were for cross-country races, which actually took place on their last day at the Olympics. It is safe to say that they saved the best for last as Kikkan Randall and Jessie Diggins won America's first-ever Olympic gold medal in cross-country skiing, taking first place in the women's team sprint freestyle relay.

The couple got lucky as spectators, despite having general admission tickets, because nearly the entire crowd left after South Korea's team did not advance to the finals. This allowed the Metcalfs room to move all over the course to see the event up close.

"To see them so up close allowed us to really feel their effort," said Aimee. "I don't know if I have ever seen someone as determined as Diggins. She looked like she was either going to win or die trying."

Tate added, "We don't know these athletes, although some of them trained in Central Oregon, but the emotion that what they did can pull out of you as a spectator was amazing. We both cried."

The trip was jam-packed for the couple.

"We saw 13 events in eight days," said Aimee. "We made a decision to be at the

Olympics for the core of the competition, which worked out very well. We made a goal of at least seeing each of the 15 different event venues, even if we could not see competitions at each of them, and we were able to do that."

An added bonus for the Metcalfs was meeting up with Steven Hunt, also of Sisters, at some of the events. "It was cool to share the experience with someone from home," said Aimee.

The couple saw a variety of events including hockey, speed skating, luge, bob sledge, and curling.

Tate described the 15 venues as being spread — think as if some events were at Mount Bachelor, others in Bend, and some at Hoodoo.

Since everything was located far from any major cities and the schedule was so tight getting from place to place, the Metcalfs did not get a deep dose of South Korea as a country, but did come away with some impressions of the culture and the country.

With all the tensions in the American news about the threat of North Korea for the past year, the Metcalfs had friends express concern about their trip in regard to safety. When the Parkland, Florida school shooting took place during the trip, the couple reflected and realized that, as far as day-to-day living goes, they felt safer in South Korea, which does have strict gun laws and a relatively low violent crime rate.

"Having that in the news while we were in a foreign country experiencing the Olympic spirit was quite ironic," said Aimee. "It did make us wonder what people



PHOTO PROVIDED

Tate and Aimee Metcalf celebrated Tate's 50th birthday with a trip to the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

from other countries thought of us as Americans."

There was never a time in South Korea that they felt unsafe other than one taxi ride with either a sleepy or perhaps somewhat intoxicated driver at the helm.

"That was scary," said Aimee.

The Lunar New Year took place in the middle of the trip, which created traffic issues as people traveled to their family homes, which actually caused the couple to miss some events.

The couple also visited the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that separates South Korea

from North Korea.

"It was intense to be there with such military presence all along the route," said Tate. "It turned out that our guide for the day was from Dayville, Oregon, who was super-excited that we were from Oregon."

The Olympics are certainly in the couple's blood now, and with Aimee's 50th birthday coming in 2020, the Metcalfs are already making plans for the summer Olympics in Tokyo, Japan.

"That's the plan," said Aimee. "Tokyo 2020... we'll be there!"

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