

A trip of a lifetime



Story by Lisa Knight

Winning a trophy that stood nearly as tall as her waist and being able to watch an All-Star game held for the last time at Yankee Stadium was the highlight for 12-year-old Alicia Portillo who participated in the Aquafina pitch, hit and run competition in New York. Alicia plays for the Casa Grande Heat fast pitch club in Phoenix, Arizona and this year qualified for the Aquafina competition where she was sent to New York on July 14.

The competition was judged on six pitches from 40 feet, the fastest time to run around the bases and the best out of three hits off a tee directly to centerfield. Alicia qualified when she won the pitching and hitting in the super regional tournament and took second in the running. This gave her enough points to go to the championships in New York City.

Once Alicia arrived she was ecstatic to receive such special attention. She was given a bat bag filled with prizes and souvenirs including an autographed baseball and an autographed helmet signed by the USA Olympic Softball team. On the field, Alicia said she was nervous to be playing on the actual Yankee Stadium, but her nerves didn't prove to be an issue when she took first in the hitting segment, second in the pitching and third in the running competition. This gave her second place overall, behind eventual winner Sydney Roumeliotis in the 11-12 year old division. "I wasn't too upset because I tried my best," Alicia said.

The excitement didn't end there. "After the competition we were allowed to catch balls hit by some of the best hitters in Major League Baseball. Now that was pretty cool," Alicia commented. She also liked how she was allowed to hang out in the bullpen where the great Mariano Rivera warmed up while she watched the Homerun Derby. Alicia's adventure ended on a high note after taking a bus tour of New York City and watching the 2008 All-Star game in Yankee Stadium, a special memory to hold on to considering she was one of the last spectators to ever be able to do that.

Alicia and her father Javier would like to give a special thanks to her team and all of her sponsors as well as ASA commissioner Don Fischel.

Photos courtesy of the Portillo family



The Texas Rangers mascot looks on as Alicia, left, sits with contestant Savannah Lomis at a brunch held at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel.



Alicia and her Dad, Javier, with their All-Star game tickets.



The Aquafina pitch, hit and run participants pose for a group photo at Yankee Stadium.



Alicia pitched on the infield at Yankee Stadium during the Aquafina competition.