

With our 20th Regional All Star Team trip under the belt, experience tells us that each delivers a treasure trove of memories, memories that will last a lifetime. The destination this year was Rio Di Janeiro, Brazil, future host for the 2016 Summer Olympics. If our trip is any indication of what Brazil holds in store, visitors will find the country to be warm, hospitable, and gracious hosts.

As for this year, our trip combined a combination of training, education, sightseeing and fun in the sun. The initial feedback from our 28 member delegation (including 19 athletes, 7 coaches and a chaperon) paints a picture that this was a very worth while adventure. Training was at the largest sports club in Rio (The Flamingo), which plays host to virtually every major sport. The gymnastics training venue was small, yet well equipped. As part of the experience our Region 5 Coaches (Todd Gardiner-IGI, Ruth and Chris Miller- Oakland, Marco Bravo-Phenom, Yuejui Li- Legacy, Tami Jacobs- Champion USA, and myself) participated in a 3 day coaches congress. This was very well received by the aspiring coaches of Brazil. Participants of this congress were eager to learn and very appreciative of our volunteer, good will efforts. Thanks coaches for sharing your knowledge!

Sightseeing opportunities are everywhere in Rio. We attended a wild Soccer game (picture 20,000 people making more noise than a 100,000 person football game in the US). We took in a cultural "Carnival" stage show that depicted the history of the Samba Schools of Brazil. No trip to Rio would be complete without a look down from the surrounding mountains (Sugar Loaf or the Christo) and of course the beaches at Ipanema and Copacabana were very popular with the girls. Souvenir shopping served to fill the voids whenever needed. Food is often an issue when we travel abroad, but not so in Rio. The meals were excellent, and if you have yet to try a Brazilian style steak house, our group would highly recommend it.

No trip would be complete without a little controversy. The traffic was an issue from time to time. We had a run in with a grab and dash camera thief (never try to outrun a dragnet of Region 5 coaches), which resulted in a police station visit to file the needed and required reports. A few pesky misquotes buzzing at night (don't forget your bug spray in Rio), a cock roach or two here and there all added a little, shall we say, excitement to the experience.

Trips like these are expensive and our delegation is extremely appreciative of the fact that our Region is willing to support this reward system for these deserving athletes. Thank you REGION 5! Without your support for our training camps, congresses and other related fundraising ventures, trips like these would not be possible. THANK YOU, Region 5 board for making these opportunities for children a priority.

Trips like these takes hours of organization. Our host was Nilson Savage (formerly from U of Oklahoma and U of Denver). He is from Brazil and handled all the on sight organization for our lodging, transportation, training, sightseeing, and meals. Having handled this chore countless times in the past, I am very aware of the amount of work

that goes into making sure every detail is covered. This delegation thanks Nilson for making sure this trip was a wonderful experience for all! Thanks Nilson!

Trips like these do not get off the ground without countless hours of at home organization also. Being tied up with Worlds preparation and the actual competition really put me in a bind for available time. When in need... Kristin Moore to the rescue. Kristin is the most detail oriented, high energy, giving volunteer around. She handled communication with the coaches, parents and athletes, step by step Visa application instructions, budget concerns, uniforms, packing lists, designed and ordered T-shirts, shopped and arranged our airline tickets, and became a last minute volunteer chaperon when we needed one. This trip could not have been successful without her efforts. The biggest of thanks to Kristin!

Rewarding our athletes is the driving force behind these international All Star Team opportunities. I sincerely hope that these deserving athletes never enter into the fog of self entitlement but rather relish the significance itself. This was more than a vacation, it was a cultural experience, and experience that some may never see again in a lifetime. I hope there is an appreciation for what was learned and what goes into making this type of reward a reality. It was my pleasure traveling with this crew of outstanding young lady athletes: (Mandy Klun, Ariel Martin, Hayley Scaman, Sammy Pearsall from IGI, Nicole Artz from Champion, Amanda Wellick and Caroline Morant from Legacy, Kate Kluz and Amy Roemmele from Oakland, Tenille Funches and Keely Kmeciak- Phenom and Lindsey Lemke, Kameron Moore, Grace Williams, Nicolle Eastman, Bailey Gardner, Bayle Pickel, Arlyn Amor and Rachel Haines from Twistars USA). I hope you enjoyed the experience as much as I.

Respectfully Submitted

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Region 5 JOPCC