

Name of game in El Salvador: tough hoops

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Sunburn, three pair of socks and a T-shirt were just part of what Don Brandel's Sports Ambassadors basketball team received in El Salvador and Guatemala.

They also ran into plenty of competition. The group, a non-denominational, non-profit Christian organization, toured the two Central American countries between Dec. 26 to Jan. 6.

Brandel, a Farmington resident, coached the team to a 14-1 mark in the 11-day period. Included in the slew of victories were triumphs over the No. 1

and No. 2 teams in El Salvador, and a win over an All-Star team in Guatemala.

"I thought it went real good," Brandel said of the trip. "It was a lot better than I expected."

SPORTS AMBASSADORS, founded in 1952, made a similar tour in the Philippines last summer. Along with disorganization on the court, Brandel's group didn't know where it was going to sleep half of the time.

On this trip, the team stayed with families in the city, and overall, was generally well received. The fact they were from the United

people in sports

States didn't cause any strife.

"What I enjoyed about the trip, staying in the homes, is that you get a total aspect of the culture," said Brandel, a graduate of Southfield High.

What Brandel shared in culture, he also passed along some coaching tips to some of the coaches. Brandel believes a player's attitude can affect 13 aspects of the game. If the attitude is refined,

so is the player's performance.

The team, made up of six college players from throughout the United States, shared in plenty of wins.

AFTER A LOSS in the first game, where the referee kept the official time on his wrist, the team reeled off 14 straight wins. Before a game with the No. 3-ranked team in San Salvador, the

players lined up to shake hands.

The Sports Ambassadors players each received a bag from the Don Bosco team. In each sack was three pair of socks and a T-shirt with their team name on the front and "San Salvador" on the back.

The sites of the games varied from 10,000-seat stadiums to outdoor courts, hence the sunburn. One game was canceled because of a blackout.

Brandel was able to detect differences between the San Salvador and Guatemala style of basketball. Both countries, he said, lack coaching knowledge. "Both countries are backward in that sense," he said. "Guatemala is more or-

ganized than El Salvador, though."

Players, themselves, might be shorter there but not lacking in desire. "Their forwards are quicker, even though they're shorter, than some are in the U.S.," noted Brandel. "They're physical. They're not afraid to play a physical game."

Brandel's team found that out firsthand in its win over the Guatemala All-Stars. The team was hacked repeatedly with little recourse from the officials. The team still pulled out a three-point win.

Sports Ambassadors plans to return to the Philippines this summer.

gymnastics

Burningham on fire for Harrison

There's a good chance that after this season ends there will be only one name registered in the Farmington Harrison gymnastics record book: Tana Burningham.

The talented sophomore won all four events and set four school records Monday, despite the Hawk's 129.55-118.1 loss to Hartland.

Burningham posted an area-best 9.45 on vault, a 9.15 on balance beam and a 9.2 on floor exercise — all Hawk records. She scored an 8.65 on uneven parallel bars which gave her an all-around score of 36.45, an Observerland and Harrison best.

The loss dropped the Hawks to 10-2 on the season. They were competing without the vacationing Jody and Tracy Solomon.

PLYMOUTH CANTON got a double dose of bad news last Friday.

The team lost its meet to Freeland, 130.75-120.25, and it lost its top all-arounder to a broken hand.

Sophomore Darcy Gignac broke her hand in two places while performing a hand stand after the meet had concluded. She is expected to be out four to six weeks.

Before the injury, she placed fifth on vault (8.15), fifth on bars (7.3), third on beam (7.3) and fifth on floor (7.9).

Mary Jo Charron placed second on beam for the Chiefs with an 8.1. Maureen McLean placed fourth on vault with an 8.3. Apryl Mosakowski tied Gignac for fifth on bars with a 7.3. Carol Horvath placed sixth on beam (7.3) and Sharon Moran placed sixth on floor (7.85).

The Chiefs are 2-8.

FARMINGTON placed third in a tri-meet with Troy and Grosse Pointe North Monday. Troy scored 121.1, North 118.8 and the Falcons 109.25.

The highlight for the Falcons was a first-place effort on beam from Julie Lawton. She scored an 8.1.

Jackie Daly placed third on vault (8.65) and Debbie Ford took a fifth on bars (6.8).

The Falcons fell to 4-9.

NORTH FARMINGTON, after an unwanted and unscheduled week vacation, swung back into action with a 125.45-124.4 win against Troy last Thursday night.

The team missed a full week after a Feb. 3 meet with Hartland was canceled.

Elleene Murtaugh led North with firsts on uneven bars (8.6), balance beam (8.4) and floor exercise (8.7). She placed second on vault (8.3).

Kara Karhu placed third on vault (8.15), third on beam (7.75) and second on floor (8.5).

Lucine Toroyan placed fourth on vault (8.05) and second on bars (8.05).

The win ups North's record to 10-1.

Farmington club 2nd in Class III

Doug Stibel of Canton Township led the Farmington Gymnastics Center Class III team to a second-place finish at the Genesee Valley Meet in Flint last Sunday.

Stibel placed third all-around in the 10-12 age division with a 53.4 total covering six events. He placed first on high bar with a 9.5. He was third on vault (9.0) and third on parallel bars (9.3). He scored 9.2 on still rings, 8.4 on pommel horse and 8.3 on floor exercise.

In Class IV (ages 10-12), Farmington's Guy Miller of Livonia placed fourth all-around with a 48.3, scoring a 9.1 on rings. Livonian John Davidson scored 48.2 all-around.

In Class IV (ages 7-9), Matt Friday of Canton placed fourth all-around with a 49.7. Kevin Szczyembara of Livonia placed fifth (49.6). Szczyembara scored a 9.1 on rings.

Mark Taube of Garden City earned a third all-around 45.9 in the Class III (ages 13 and up) division. John Juliano of Farmington scored 44.3 all-around and Brian Longstrech of West Bloomfield 41.4.

The Farmington club is coached by Kevin Watson.

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