“The most important thing is to try and inspire people so that they can be great in whatever they want to do.” - Kobe Bryant

ABSTRACT

The two strength and conditioning coaches I worked with were named Luis and Guillermo. They both had experience either coaching or playing in America, so they were good at providing their insights and thoughts of Spanish athletes. I would watch as they ran exercise sessions, making note of and learning different techniques and exercises they used. One day, Guillermo had me lead a core strengthening session for a 14-year-old Spanish girls team. The quick 30-minute circuit I came up with included: Russian twists, plank, dumbbell swings, mountain climbers, sit-ups (with plate across chest), bicycle, and legs (holding out plate in hands and tracing letters) determined that core exercises would be the most beneficial in improving their levels of displacement.

STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

Sports are such a fundamental part of shaping a young athlete’s life. Participation in sports teaches one teamwork, leadership, communication, determination, and true grit. I have experienced this firsthand in my life and had a chance to further learn about the importance of sports during my study abroad experience. I knew that studying abroad had many benefits such as growing closer to a culture and experiencing new things, but I had much personal growth in communication, leadership, and self-confidence. During my 8 weeks in Valencia, Spain I was able to live with a Spanish family to fully immerse myself in the culture, and I made many new friends as we explored together. For my internship I worked at a youth basketball club, CB L’Horta Godella, alongside the club’s strength and conditioning coach, Andrea Godella. My job truly combined all of my passions and it allowed me to grow more than I could have ever imagined, this was the best experience of my life.

INTRODUCTION

Before starting my internship, I was only given only basic ideas of what my job tasks would be. I knew that they would vary from day to day, as well as language differences, I noticed that everyone there was just like me, passionate about sports and willing to do whatever it takes to have their athletes be the best.

COACHING

The most rewarding and unexpectedly favorite part of my job was being a coach for the youngest kids at the summer basketball camp. I was tasked with coaching the 5-7 year-olds and the only instruction given was to teach them basic skills and to have fun. I knew the language barrier would make it difficult, but I wanted to be that leader to the kids not only basketball skills, but important life skills as well. This was my first time helping to focus on the little things and the people around you who matter, that is how you will truly succeed, and that is what I wanted to pass on to these kids. I knew I wanted to share my passion and love for sports with these young kids, and for all of us to have fun. For the technical side of things, I turned to “Successful Coaching” (2004) by Ramier Martens. From this I learned there were four steps to teaching technical skill (Martens, 2004, p. 199):
1. Introduce the technical skill
2. Demonstrate and explain the technical skill
3. Have the athletes practice the technical skill
4. Correct errors

Each day, I would come to work with a basic plan in mind and use these four steps to help the young athletes learn the skills of the game. I would have them do passing, shooting, and dribbling drills, starting with the simplest form and progressing as the camp went on. I kept in mind these four steps and knew I played a vital role to the kids because this was potentially the first time they played basketball. The communication was once again the hardest part, as I had to improve my nonverbal communication and listening skills. Being able to determine that the kids were being overzealous or not using proper body language, and clap for them when I wanted to praise their work. I actively worked on learning a few key phrases like “lista?” (“ready?”), “salito!” (“Jump”), and “cambio” (“change/switch”) to be able to get their attention or say during drills. Of course, we would have a lot of fun together, smiling, laughing, and playing games. Two games were played many times; Panuelo (handkerchief) and Bomba (bomb), however, their favorite thing to do was play a scrimmage. They always wanted me on their team, I guess being 5’1” is an advantage when playing with five-year-olds. Coaching these young kids at basketball camp was the most rewarding part of my internship. My favorite moment of the whole time I was in Spain came one morning when I was arriving to work. The kids would always be playing around on the courts outside before camp started and when the ones in my group saw me walking up to the building they came joyfully screaming and yelling my name. Right in that moment, I knew I had made an impact in their lives, just as they had made an impact in mine.

CONCLUSION

My internship in Spain was the best experience of my life. During my time abroad, I got to experience a new culture and live just as they do in Valencia. I loved getting to live with my Spanish family and making new friends and exploring with them. My internship at CB L’Horta Godella combined all of my passions and turned it into one job where I grew and became more confident each day. By working with strength and conditioning coaches and a physical therapist, I was able to see their importance to athletes and how their jobs align to better the kids. I will be able to use my knowledge learned in my future profession. The hardest part of this whole experience was being able to communicate effectively. I picked up on new Spanish words daily, my favorite being “fecciones” (push-ups), and I know I will never just call them push-ups again. The best part of my experience was getting to coach the kids, they made me smile daily and provided me with a big confidence boost. My eight weeks in Valencia flew by, but I knew that it had a lifelong impact on how I would approach constant communication with kids, play sports, and live overall. I absolutely loved working for CB L’Horta Godella and getting to be in Valencia during this time, it was the best experience in my life, and I cannot wait to return to Spain.

REFERENCES

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