



Madagascar (Not the Movie) Report

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Our goal for the trip in Madagascar was to head over there to help set up and launch the Athletes in Action program in Madagascar. In order to do so, we ran basketball camps in two different cities, one in the capital Antananarivo, two in two different neighbouring villages, and one in the basketball hub of Madagascar Ansirabe. Our goal was to get them started and provide them with enough connections and knowledge in order to continue and be sustainable after we left. When we first landed, we met up with the people going to be leading the new Athletes in Action Madagascar program and explained to them how and what makes us successful back in North America. Our first day in Madagascar (Friday) we held a recruiting session for local university players to join our team and to connect with the local basketball players. We found someone linked to the national basketball team of Madagascar and set up a basketball game against that team. We went into triple overtime with them, which was enough to gain their respect and put Athletes in Action in the local newspaper, talking about the match between Athletes in Action and the national team, spreading word about our name which was really good. In addition, we got the players from the recruitment session to spread word about the camps happening. The next two days (Saturday and Sunday) were the camps and we had around 150 athletes show up and around 20 local kids come to hang around. Here we taught them essential tangible and intangible basketball skills such as dribbling, shooting, communication, and leadership through various basketball drills simulating game like scenarios. During this time, I got to talking to a bunch of athletes, learning about their life story, and telling them about the program we are setting up. In addition, I was able to speak to the whole camp about my story and my journey to leadership and how I acquired confidence. There was a lot of interest and questions about how to sign up and join the organization which was really

good to see. In addition, we played against a couple of the local basketball teams there in order to gain respect for the program and to let the people watching know that we know what we are doing. The next couple days we went to neighbouring villages and went to the local schools to run similar camps and spread word about the program to the leaders of the school and to the kids attending the school. Here we focused more on introducing the sport of basketball to them as many of them did not know the sport of basketball. All the kids had fun and I believe we did a good job of demonstrating what they would get if they joined Athletes in Action. The next couple days we scheduled more scrimmages against Division 1 teams in Madagascar, one in Antanarivo and one in Antsirabe. While in Antsirabe, we held another 2-day basketball development camp which attracted a lot of attention from the locals from the town nearby. Here we focused on similar concepts from the previous camps, working on skill building and development of intangible things such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and hard work. This was really good, as it spread the word about the program of Athletes in Action in the city where basketball is most popular in Madagascar and gained a positive reputation during the two days we were there.

A couple things I learned about leadership was the importance of confidence in a leader. This trip really helped me develop and find confidence in myself which I saw was a key trait in the successful leaders tagging along on my trip. In addition, once I realized the importance of this, I started applying it to my leadership roles on the trip and found more success, gained more respect from fellow leaders, and became more efficient in communicating ideas and information. In terms of things, I realized I need to continue to work on as a leader, I need to

improve my planning skills and my ability to plan ahead. My main plan for this trip was to land and think of ways there to complete my SMART goals but I realized the importance of having a plan going into it and not thinking of things on the fly. Sure being able to adapt on-site is essential but having an initial plan helps maximize impact while on-site. In addition, I would have loved to see how the people we are leaving in charge of the Athletes in Action Madagascar runs the program. Since we were there for a short period, we were unable to see the path of which they decide to take this program.

This project's sustainability will be measured by the impact Athletes in Action Madagascar has and if it's still around in a couple years. Actually, this program was able to participate and involve themselves in the Island Games (big tournament where countries from Africa come to participate) from the connection we made with the national team of Madagascar. I believe that this program we launched will continue to impact the lives and communities around Madagascar long after we have left. I would like to thank Matthew Guynup, the Laidlaw Scholars Foundation, Shraddha Prasad, and the UofT Laidlaw Scholars Programme for this amazing opportunity and this life changing experience.