

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

REPORT ON ATHLETIC TRIP  
TO  
COLOMBIA, SOUTH AMERICA

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REPORT ON ATHLETIC TRIP  
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PART I

TRIP DETAILS

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TRIP DETAILS

INITIAL CONTACTS

In October of 1973, when Florida International University played the University of Miami in soccer, the Athletic Department invited Mr. Simon Daro to be their guest since the winner of that game would receive the Daro Cup emblematic of intercollegiate soccer supremacy in Florida. Mr. Daro had lived in Bogota, Colombia for 45 years during which time he had made many friends, especially with those in the sports world due to his interest in soccer. He, therefore, asked us if we would be interested in going to Colombia since he knew of some contacts which could help us in working out arrangements. We indicated we were interested and asked him to meet with the Director of Athletics, the Chairman of the Athletic Council and several coaches to further discuss the matter.

The meeting was held and he gave us the names of several men with whom he had been speaking in Colombia, including Dr. Zuluaga, the Director of Coldsportes and Dr. Galeano, the Director of CODUC, the University Sports Committee. It was agreed at this meeting that this was an opportunity we should explore. Accordingly, a letter was sent to Coldsportes explaining our desire to meet with them. A message was also taken to them in person by Mr. Daro since sometimes the mail between Colombia and the United States is not always reliable and

sometimes words are lost in translation.

The gentlemen representing Coldesportes were most anxious to hear of our interest and invited the Director of Athletics, Dr. Paul E. Hartman, to visit them the first week in December in order to set up an exchange program. The trip was cleared through the University and on December 4th Dr. Hartman began a series of meetings with Directors of various sports programs in Colombia while a guest of the Colombian government.

At the meetings Dr. Hartman was informed that the Colombian people were interested in three separate projects. One, the exchange of athletic teams in order to develop better international relations and improve the quality of athletics in Colombia. Second, was a program whereby Florida International University would try to help identify outstanding coaches particularly in basketball and baseball who would be willing to come to Colombia for a period of one to three months to put on clinics and help them develop advanced coaching techniques. Third, was a proposal supported by the Colombian Ministry of Education which involved the possibility of Florida International developing a training program for Colombian physical education teachers. This program would be held in Miami at the Florida International University campus and would be funded for the most part by a grant that Colombia had from the United States government for the purpose of developing better teachers.

Following the meetings Dr. Hartman was taken on a three city tour of Colombia -- Bogota, Cali, and Medellin -- in order to see the athletic facilities where teams would be participating if they should come to Colombia. The decision was reached at this time to invite Florida International University to bring teams in soccer, wrestling, tennis, and basketball to Colombia the first week in February. Limits were set as to the number of individual team members and a total delegation number set at 60.

Dr. Hartman then brought the proposal back to Florida International University and presented it to the Athletic Council. The Council approved the trip and made a subsequent proposal to the Budget Committee requesting a \$5,000 financial support of the teams' transportation cost to Colombia. The Colombian government had agreed to pay for all expenses while in that country. Receiving final confirmation, members of the Athletic Department went to work readying themselves for the trip.

#### GETTING READY

Many plans had to be made for taking a delegation of this size to a foreign country. Players had to be selected for the various teams, visas or passports had to be prepared, individuals who did not have small pox shots had to get vaccinated, transportation arrangements had to be made with an airlines that would fly into Bogota, gifts had to be

bought to exchange with the various athletic teams, last minute details had to be taken care of pertaining to class assignments, news releases, and transportation to the airport.

A fitting climax to the period of preparation was a send-off party on Thursday evening, January 31st, by the Sisters of Bogota. This group made up of mainly Colombian people living in Miami hosted a cocktail party on the fifth floor of the Primera Casa for all traveling squad members and their friends. Mr. Simon Daro provided an elaborate cake with a replica of his soccer trophy on top. At this affair the group also donated \$150 to the Athletic Department to use towards international travel.

Airline arrangements had been made with Aerocondor who not only gave the University a group rate due to its large number, but also a further reduction partly due to the fact that a number of the soccer players play for the Aerocondor soccer team in Miami. The total cost per person round trip to Colombia was \$120. The only drawback to the flight was that it left at 5:00 a.m. meaning most of the people had to get up in the early morning hours or in the case of some individuals did not go to bed at all. Nevertheless, everyone was on time and the trip got off to a very smooth beginning.

#### ARRIVING IN BOGOTA

After an easy flight and a short touchdown at Medellin Airport the delegation arrived in Bogota at approximately 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 2nd. A partial itinerary had been sent to the delegation prior to leaving Miami and, therefore, they knew that the tennis team and basketball club would be in action the first day and that the soccer team would be playing the second day.

Meanwhile, the wrestling team would be housed in Cali and be traveling directly from the Bogota Airport at 2:00 p.m. that afternoon.

The teams in Bogota were housed in a middle price hotel called the Santa Fe located in the old section of the city and quite near many of the interesting shops and the Presidential Palace.

The basketball team which was to play at 1:00 p.m. in the afternoon had a job cut out for them. Not only had they been traveling most of the night, but they were about to play on national television at an altitude of 8,500 feet against the best team in Colombia. Our club which was more or less a pick up group of undergraduates, graduates, and faculty members had been playing together for a number of games, but these had been back in the States under American rules and they were about to be baptised to play under international conditions which they found were entirely different. The



object of international rules is to not let a person take an easy shot; therefore, if a person beats you or is about to take a layup you foul him. If the shot was not in progress they merely take the ball out of bounds. Most foreign teams do not have one or two outstanding stars, but 12 equally skilled individuals and fouling out does not seem to matter as much as it does in American basketball.

No one can say for sure what happened to the squad in the first ten or fifteen minutes of the game, but they did not play anywhere near their potential and found themselves behind 22-0 before they scored a point. From then on throughout the rest of their games the contests were fairly even. Officiating and international rules remained the greatest problem throughout the trip as the basketball squad went on to win one of four games. However, in fairness to the club they did maintain a high degree of sportsmanship under adverse conditions and the opposition was more skilled than most of us gave them credit.

Although the Colombians had no big men to throw against us they had large numbers of men that could run, jump, ball handle, play defense and score with a great deal of proficiency.

To give one a little bit better picture of how our team adjusted, the next morning at 9:00 a.m. we played the same team and almost did a turnabout as we jumped off to a commanding lead and led them for most of the first half before Colombia finally overtook us and won by a few points.

The tennis team was up against some of the same negative factors, altitude, clay surfaces, and personnel who probably were not legitimate university students. The number one man on the Colombian University team was the brother of one of the Davis Cup stars who beat the United States in the recent Davis Cup match. The number two player was the tennis coach who was the sixth ranking player in Colombia and the number three player was a thirteen year old high school sophomore who had already been playing on an international level and had played against some of our players in a recent tournament in Miami.

With this type of opposition the tennis team got off to a very slow start dropping all eight of its matches, including six by the men and two by the women's team which had been borrowed from Dade North and South for the purpose of the trip. The tennis squad was also to meet the same team the next day and suffered a similar fate.

The soccer team was also experiencing the same type of frustration, altitude, and some opposition that we wouldn't normally consider university students. The team that they were playing was the championship university team, but three of their front line were professional players for the top professional team in Colombia. These men dominated the game and scored several of the goals that eventually led to a 4-1 setback for the FIU booters. The game was played

before 40,000 fans who had come not only to see their best university team play, but also the professional match which would follow.

Meanwhile, down in Cali the wrestling team was holding the FIU banner high. The Colombian National Team was brought in against them and although some of our men had to wrestle as many as three matches in a row in order to meet the best Colombian wrestler in that weight division, our team was victorious.

On Monday the three teams in Bogota flew to Cali to join the wrestling team and continue the competitive program. The basketball team won one and lost one; the soccer team won one and tied one; and, the tennis team won both their matches. The wrestling squad going up against an all star group in Boga, consisting of many of the national team members they had wrestled two days before, was even better as they lost only two bouts in the entire match.

While in Cali a number of the coaches and other professors in the delegation gave conferences in their specialty areas. Talks were given in kinesiology, psychology of sport, and organization and administration of athletics. These were very well received and some of the individuals were approached to give talks in Medellin and also possibly come back to Colombia at a later time to give further presentations.

While competition was being held other individuals in the delegation were exploring the possibility of coach and professorial exchange programs and development of the training program for Colombian physical education teachers. Individuals from Florida International University went out into the local schools and observed physical education and health programs and talked to a number of the teachers.

Our hosts in Cali also provided us with many cultural experiences including tours, musical demonstrations, and folk dancing. Prior to our leaving a lunch was held at the beautiful Cali Country Club and presentations consisting of silver trays inscribed to each particular sport were presented to the coaches as mementos of their trip to Cali.

On Thursday the delegation took off at 2:00 p.m. in anticipation of a short flight to Medellin. However, it was not in the stars as weather intervened. The flight had a short stopover in Parid. When we landed at that small city it was raining and upon taking off weather seemed to get better, but as the wheels were lowered to land at Medellin the airport informed the plane that it was closed due to cloud conditions. The plane turned back to Parid and when it was about half way there got word that the airport was again open. The plane, however, was running short of fuel so the captain decided to keep going to Parid, refuel, and fly to Medellin.

Unfortunately, Medellin has no lights and, therefore, it was necessary for us to refuel immediately since it was now after three in the afternoon and the Medellin Airport would close by six. Ironically, only one man in Parid is authorized to pump gasoline and he had left the airport and could not be found. By the time he was located and got back to the airport it was 8:00 p.m. After the plane was fueled the entire delegation was flown to Bogota and housed in a hotel overnight. The next day they were flown to Medellin.

Although the teams were only at this beautiful city for one day it was a fitting climax to the trip. The weather and scenery were beautiful and a warm congenial feeling spread over the entire group as they departed for Miami on Saturday, February 9th.

While in Medellin the soccer team and tennis team won their matches. The basketball team lost their final encounter. At a banquet on the last night Dr. Hartman was presented with a small plaque as a remembrance of the team's trip to Colombia and he in turn presented our host Dr. Galeano with a pen set from Florida International and presented other gifts to the hosts from that city.

The trip back to Miami was uneventful except for a great deal of time spent checking into the airport at Medellin and again going through customs and immigration upon arriving in Miami. It was found that there were four young men on our

soccer team who had not kept their visas up to date and they were detained at Miami International Airport until we could fill out the proper papers. They were released pending further investigation. Monday we were able to straighten out the visa situation. Apparently one man was all right; it had been an immigration official's mistake, but the other three men needed to take out new visas.

#### REFLECTIONS ON THE TRIP

Gifts. Florida International University spent approximately \$200 on gifts for friends in Colombia, but in the final analysis it appeared that this probably was not enough. The \$200 was absorbed in decals for each of the players that we played against which cost 25 to 29 cents each, small pennants for most of the teams we played against which were \$1.50, two banners for each of the cities that we played in for the host and the Coldesportes headquarters were \$5.95 each. FIU logos which were given to coaches, game officials, and city officials that were involved with making our trip successful were purchased for \$1.40 each. A tie tack costing \$1.50 was purchased to give to a Colombian official as an emergency gift and a \$16.00 pen holder and plaque was purchased to give to Dr. Galeano.

We ran out of the pennants, logos, and decals and in return we were given little banners, the silver trays previously mentioned

and the plaque presented to the Director of Athletics by Dr. Galeano. There were also a few exchanges in terms of shirts and things of that type which are traditional on international trips.

Prior to the trip Mr. Simon Daro had indicated that he wanted Dr. Hartman to get together with his plant manager in Bogota, Mr. Bernard Foreman, and select a trophy. When Dr. Hartman met with Dr. Galeano to discuss the trophy it was decided to purchase two trophies symbolic of the friendship between the two countries. Therefore, two identical trophies were obtained and on it was written, "Simon Daro Cup of Friendship, Florida International University, Colombia, 1974."

The Colombians have a trophy with the inscription in English and Florida International University has a trophy with the inscription in Spanish. The trophy is a silver bowl which sets atop a sterling silver tray which is decorated around the edge by shields from the various cities in Colombia.

Accommodations. The team was housed in adequate accommodations. The hotel in Bogota was satisfactory and the Intercontinental Hotel in Medellin was outstanding. However, the facilities in Cali presented several problems. The team was housed in bunk rooms with as many as five men per room.

The bunks had wooden bottoms with either foam or thin cotton mattresses on top. This coupled with the noisy hallways and several other people in the room made it difficult for some individuals to sleep. In addition, the athletic complex was secured at 10:30 p.m. in the evening making it very difficult for our athletes to come and go after that time period. This was mainly due to the fact that the Colombian athletes training for the Central American Games were also housed in the same complex and for discipline reasons had to be in by that time period. This was hard for some of our people to accept.

The food in the complex was acceptable, but not up to the standards our people were used to. It was very bland with meals consisting of such items as rice, fried chicken, jello, and a salad. Overall the food ranged from average to very good and we were given a lot of traditional Colombian food which may or may not have been good for our digestive tract, but certainly was helpful to our cultural understanding.

Medical Problems. We were very fortunate to not only have a trainer, but also our team physician, Dr. Joseph Kalbac, and his wife accompany us on the trip. Dr. Kalbac paid his own way and in addition to donating his services brought along a large number of medical supplies and was on call 24 hours a day. Several nights he and the trainer were up most of the



night with sick individuals. Overall approximately two-thirds of the delegation were sick and needed medication. It was hard to trace exactly the cause of the problem. All of the digestive complications did not seem similar in nature and some were not affected at all. It was thought that maybe the water was a problem as we so often hear, but the people in Bogota, Cali, and Medellin claim the water was pure and it must be something else. It is quite possible that they were right. The strange food, the altitude, the tired condition of the athletes and pathogens all might have contributed to cause some of the internal disturbances.

- No one was seriously hurt athletically, although one individual, a soccer player, did have an attack of blood poisoning and was hospitalized for a day. Complete medical reports are available from either the trainer or Dr. Kalbac. From this experience we learned that it is extremely beneficial to take qualified medical personnel along with us on any extended trips to foreign countries.

Schedule. The schedule that the athletes had was easy by American standards, but due to the travel, the stomach conditions, the sightseeing, and other cultural aspects the players wanted to absorb the schedule was fairly demanding. Part of the problem lay in the fact that coaches wanted to practice at times when they weren't competing in order to adjust to altitude or international rules and to maintain a high degree of condition such as the case with the wrestling team.

Because of this there was not as much free time as some of the players would have liked. However, they have to remember that the basic purpose of the trip was for international understanding through athletic competition and, therefore, energies should be channeled in that direction.

It was suggested that on future trips, especially to a country such as Bogota which has an altitude factor to consider that some gradual working up to that altitude level be incorporated in the itinerary.

Culture. Despite the schedule most of our delegation were able to frequently visit shops and buy many objects to bring home. As previously mentioned tours were arranged for those who wanted to avail themselves of the opportunity and at various times students were brought in from the universities for musical and dance demonstrations.

Proposed Visit of Colombia to Miami. It is hopeful that money can be raised in the next few months that will enable us to invite teams from Colombia to Miami next October or November. Our entire delegation feels very strongly about returning the hospitality that was so graciously extended to us by the Colombian people. We would invite them here under the same program and same terms that we were invited to Colombia. They would pay their way here and we would house, feed, and set up schedules for them while they are in the Miami area.

A committee is currently being formed to work on this project and it is hoped that it will become a reality before the year is out.

Other Programs. While we were in Colombia we did not neglect our overall mission of developing a broad based exchange program involving both teachers and coaches and the development of a training program for Colombian physical education teachers. Extensive work has been done in this area and a number of our people made excellent contacts. Within the next two weeks a proposal will be made by our University to the Colombian Ministry of Education to invite Colombian students to the Miami area during the summer months for training in physical education.

Public Relations. One area where we feel we did not do a very good job was in informing the University and the Miami community of our daily progress throughout our trip. Unfortunately, communications are not very good between Colombia and the United States. Telephone calls have to be placed many hours ahead of time and air mail takes a week or more to be delivered. The telegraph service is not much better than direct phone service. In the future a greater effort should be put forth since one of the reasons for athletics is public relations and we want the community to know our desire to improve international understanding. Regardless much more

should have been done prior to departure and following the trip so that the University might benefit from further community support in this area.

Final Summary. In short, the trip can be termed a great success. The cost to the University will run about \$8,000. Most of this is involved in the transportation cost of getting 64 people to Colombia. It is hoped that most of this money will be eventually repaid to the University and to the Athletic budget through private donations. However, the education gained from this experience cannot be measured in dollars. It can only be measured in the attitudes and understandings of the young people and faculty who made the trip and the implication to their lives that this international experience has afforded them. Hopefully, somewhere, sometime our world will be a little bit better because a few more people now understand a little but better their neighbors in a far away place.

REPORT ON ATHLETIC TRIP

TO

COLOMBIA, SOUTH AMERICA

PART II

PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS

REPORT ON ATHLETIC TRIP  
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PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS

One has to wonder why a university should spend \$8,000 to send a group of students and faculty to South America for a week. This question becomes even more important when during the trip athletes are observed emotionally involved in winning a ball game which in essence should not mean very much since no championship or other reward is involved. One further wonders why the investment when they hear negative remarks about accommodations, food, or schedule. Yet, in the final analysis, although no tangible reason can be pointed out, the feeling is, "what a great experience, let's try to do it again."

It was also noted as the trip progressed that those who once grumbled began to praise. Those that were last in the heat of competition now shake hands and exchange gifts and those who were wondering what it was all about begin to appreciate not only people whom they did not fully understand, but also begin to develop a deeper understanding of their own life and of American culture.

Our basketball players could not understand much of the grabbing and rough play leading to fouls on the part of the Colombian teams. This was due in part to the way Americans are taught to play basketball. They could not conceive of the

fact that the Colombian children are taught to play basketball using international rules and that this is the style that they feel is correct. By the fifth game, however, whether our athletes understood the true cultural implications or not it was our delegation that was fouling and grabbing and the Colombian players who seemed to be a little bit bewildered.

An analogy can be drawn between some of the problems we faced on our trip and problems we face in our own country. We often fail to realize when attempting to communicate with people who are from a different background that they perceive things differently. What we feel is wrong may be perfectly acceptable behavior to others because of their heritage and our understanding of these reactions alleviate a great many negative encounters with these individuals. This, then, is the purpose for an international trip. Not only to learn about people of other lands, but also to help us understand our own a little bit better.

Most of us have had to answer the question what does international stand for? The Division of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Athletics has put a great deal of effort into trying to find an answer to this question. International content has been added to the curriculum. International students have been sought for our athletic teams. We have partaken in programs such as Cuban Awareness and language speaking courses. We have hired individuals with

international interests. Despite these efforts we did not feel we were meeting our international commitment. In athletics we did not just want to take trips abroad, recruit foreign athletes, or promote our program with international flavor, but to understand people of other lands in the hope that this would in turn contribute to a better world.

International understanding is perhaps the key to world peace, poverty, pollution, energy crises and other problems. We feel we have taken one small step in this direction and hope we can continue to make these experiences available to our students.



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PART III

ENCLOSURES