

Boca Raton Journal: November 18–25, 2011

By Lesley Chilton

Lesley Chilton (1994) from Eden Prairie writes about her experience in Boca Raton, Fla. over Thanksgiving playing with the US Youth Soccer Region II ODP Team. Her experience involved playing soccer against other players from around the country, volunteering at a local park, going to the beach and enjoying a fantastic Thanksgiving dinner. Congratulations to Lesley and Darian Powell (1994) from La Porte City, Iowa/Shattuck-St. Mary's who also participated in the event.

John Curtis

MYSA Director of Coaching and Player Development

My trip to Florida began at 11 in the morning on the 18th of November. I left Minneapolis with my father and we met up with my grandma in Atlanta while waiting to get on the flight that would take us to Miami. Once we arrived in Miami, it was raining but I saw it as a positive since it was a warm rain instead of snow. Our plane was a bit delayed arriving into Miami and renting a car was far from fast service. We were all unfamiliar with the Miami area and got lost in the first two minutes on our way to Boca Raton. When we finally arrived at my hotel, we only had five minutes to spare. Thankfully, I wasn't the last one there; other planes had been delayed as well. Once all of the Region II 1994 team was present, our administrator, Vince, handed out warm ups, jerseys, practice kits, rain gear and bags.

Day 1, our alarms went off early in the morning at seven o'clock. We ate breakfast, one we would become very accustomed to because it was the same meal for six days in a row, and were off to the fields to do work. However, they weren't the fields that you are thinking of. These fields didn't have goals or soccer balls. These fields were full of trees and plants. We were on our way to do volunteer work at a local park where we dug holes, weeded, and planted trees for three hours. This may not seem like a lot of fun, but everyone there was so grateful that we were helping and happy to be working that it was easily made fun. The warm 80 degree weather was a nice change from the snow in Minnesota as well.

After volunteering, we headed back to the hotel to eat lunch and then were off to the soccer fields. Practice that day was spent running drills related to a good first touch and formation when we lose and gain the ball. A quote said by my coach while working on our 4-2-1-2-1 formation was, "Only people get tired. You can pass the ball any amount of space for 90 minutes and it will never grow tired. Make the ball do the work."

Day 2 was our first game day against our opponent, Region III (South). We scored a goal early but

unfortunately were unable to maintain the lead. The game ended 1-1. After the game, everyone was very tired so we went to see a movie as a team.

Day 3 was filled with a lot of resting, practicing, icing sore muscles, and eating. We had to recover for our big game against Region IV the next day.

Day 4 against Region IV (West). This game was in the afternoon heat, so my team was busy hydrating and loosening up prior to the game. The game was scoreless in the first half, but still well played. We had watched our film from the first game and our coach felt that we had incorporated improvements into our play. Region IV came out very strong in the second half and scored in the first five minutes. Coming off of the field after 80 minutes of play, I was gasping for air. The Florida humidity and sun had taken all that I could give right out of me. The game ended 1-0 Region IV.

Day 5 was once again a day of relaxation at the pool and a short trip to the beach. We had a training session with a sport's psychology major named Max. During this session we learned about the power of your mind and how you can use it to your advantage with sports. Max had us run soccer drills, but without the ball. We would kick and pass an imaginary ball. After our session, we had Thanksgiving dinner. The dinner and dessert was great. Everyone was stuffed full of turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, ham, chocolate cake and pumpkin pie.

Day 6 was our final day for interregional camp and was also Thanksgiving Day. Wake up time was 5:40 a.m. We were out the door headed to the fields by 6:10 and on the field playing in a soccer game at 7:00 a.m. Region I (East) was our final game and it ended, once again, as a loss 1-0.

At the end of our game, our coach said that he was very proud of us for giving it all we could. He said that all of the coaches watching, even the ones from the other teams, said that Region II, our region, played the best soccer and were the better team in all three games. We were the team to play together but were unlucky in finishing our shots.

I learned so much during my experience in Florida. The speed of play was much faster and your opponents gave you less reaction time. I know I am capable of playing at this level, but also have much room for improvement. This has inspired me to try my best and get ready for my upcoming season with my club team and also with the University of Dayton Flyers, the team I will be playing for in college next year.