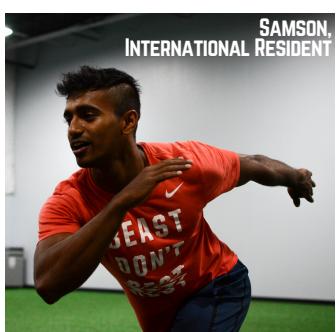


Athletes in Action 2017-2018 year-end update from the

SPORTS T.E.A.M.

TRAIN • ENGAGE • ACCELERATE • MULTIPLY



When I reflect on 2018, I consider the far-reaching hand of our tours; from the inmates in a Sao Paulo prison to the terminally ill patients in the Ukrainian children's hospital, and the people in the 20+ toured cities in between. I see roots forming here in Xenia from the creation of our newest spiritual movement, The International Residential Academy, and the launching pad our campus has served for team tours and Captains Academies. Most of all, I see how we have grown in our identity as a division and risen to the new challenges of sport culture in which we minister. **When I think of this year I am quick to see the hand of the Lord leading us toward himself and opening doors we assumed were walls.**

Ephesians 3:14-21 was our Sports TEAM division's meditation this year. It is our joy to share with you how God answered our prayer for spiritual strength in our camps, tours, academies and outreaches.

TRAIN

The Sports TEAM division took on the challenge of discovering ways we could better steward the Sports Complex. Over the spring and summer, seven international athletes arrived in Xenia to help us prototype an International Residential Academy. By mid-August, four athletes had multiple college offers to compete in the U.S. The fruitfulness of the prototype overflowed into local high school athletes also training with our team. Though we have rejoiced in the athletic outcomes, we rejoice even more in what God has done in the hearts of these young men and women. Rohan, a cultural Hindu from India, began to ask questions about the bible, and eventually, *asked for a bible* this summer. Samson, a new Christian believer from India said, "**The best part of this academy isn't the basketball, but the faith community. I haven't experienced anything like this, before.**" What an honor it is to start using our Sports Complex to train these athletes physically and spiritually!

ENGAGE:

Eggy, a Mongolian basketball coach, found himself at the International Coaches Academy after decades of alcoholism and rejecting a life with Christ. He responded to an invitation from Ebi, an AIA staff, with hopes of developing himself as a basketball coach. More than 20 coaches from 14 different countries came to the AIA Headquarters for the Academy and grew in their coaching skills and were exposed to the Gospel. Halfway through the Academy, Eggy shared that he was beginning to understand and desire a relationship with God. Ebi then began to explain the Gospel to Eggy and shared how he can know and have a personal relationship with God through placing his faith in Jesus. **That night Eggy prayed and gave his life to Christ!** We have since learned that Eggy passed away suddenly this summer. Though we grieve for Eggy, we celebrate the Lord's grace in revealing himself to Eggy before his passing.

ACCELERATE:

Davanbandii is a young Mongolian wrestler who came to faith through our camps years ago. During the Central Asia Wrestling camp this year, he took part in bible studies and was able to share his testimony. His engaging personality and kind heart allowed our team and the people of Central Asia to take to him quickly. Davanbandii will be the first wrestler to start interning with AIA Mongolia in the fall. **His participation in the Central Asia Wrestling tour also helped create a vision for Mongolia to be a sending nation which accelerates our mission to reach every team, every sport and every nation.**

MULTIPLY:

Lexie participated in the women's basketball tour to Ethiopia this summer after answering an invitation from Jackie, her friend and a seasoned AIA student athlete. During the trip Lexie committed her life to Christ! Jackie and the team rejoiced alongside her decision. **The very next day Lexie, eager to share the life-changing news of the Gospel, engaged with an Ethiopian coach through the Soularium tool.** The coach also made a decision to follow Christ and has been connected with the AIA long-term staff for further spiritual development! **We rejoice not only for the multiplicational evidence we saw, but the ripple effect it will have in Lexie's team, the coaches players, their circles of influence, and so on.**

This year was robust with stories of spiritual victories like those noted above. We have been strengthened as individuals and as a division, often left in moments of pure 'awe'. All glory be to God! **"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."** Ephesians 3:20, 21

I am grateful to stand with this team full of souls fighting a valiant fight, loyal to the mission, loving 'till it hurts, hearts laid out and boots dirty to show for it.

