

Africa *from B1*

PHOTO C/O CHRISTINA AND ADELLE KENT

Kent (front left) with the other wrestlers and coaches of the Oregon contingent that visited South Africa earlier this month.

skill was evident upon competing in various locations in South Africa.

"For the most part, we wrestled in dual meets, which is just two teams coming together to play each other," said Kent. "But we did have one big tournament. It's called the Big Five and it's one of the biggest tournaments in South Africa ... so we went there and it's bigger than their nationals. I think most of our weights probably won and they were very upset that we won."

Unfortunately for Kent, though her trip was comprised of taking in a new culture and observing her first international wrestling tournament abroad, there was no wrestling. Earlier this summer at the U.S. Marine Corps Junior Nationals in Fargo, N.D. Kent suffered a knee injury in the quarterfinals which, before making the trip to Africa, was confirmed to be a torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL).

While a torn ACL can be a debilitating injury for athletes in any sport, Kent and her moth-

er Christina remain hopeful of her recovery.

"We're working on figuring out rehab so she can maybe wrestle at the end of the season," said Christina Kent.

"We're just kind of rolling with the punches right now. Rehab, surgery, and I'm probably going to be a manager for volleyball during the fall," added Adelle.

Nonetheless, the trip was a valuable experience for Kent even despite the injury, gaining unique insight into the differences in wrestling development - particularly for girls - all over the world.

"It wasn't as developed as it is here. The guys had some good competition, but the girls wrestling just isn't as developed."

Christina Kent, an assistant coach for the high school team, has also noticed this trend throughout her years of experience in the wrestling world adding, "Girls wrestling in general is still a developing sport and I feel in the U.S. it's starting to evolve into a much bigger sport,

but internationally, it's still in its infancy."

While Kent has travelled all over the U.S. for wrestling tournaments, her first trip abroad turned out to be an eye-opening experience that went well beyond athletics. Whether it was seeing bathroom prayer rooms during a brief stop in Dubai before arriving in South Africa, the decidedly reckless nature of taxi drivers in a foreign country, staying with local host families or a litany of new food experiences, the whole trip was an eye-opener for Kent.

"My first host family, it was in Cape Town, so they call them 'coast people' and they spoke one of those languages that clicks, Xhosa I think is what it's called. And it took me awhile to figure out what language they were speaking and they'd turn to us and speak English and then turn around and speak Xhosa again with each other ... but I got lucky and I had really good experiences with all my host families," said Kent.

As a first time international traveler, Kent saw both the similarities and differences that define humanity and its myriad cultures and customs.

"It's a very community-oriented country. So here our homes are kind of our homes and we stay in our homes and no one else comes over, but there you have people over for barbecues - they call them 'braais' - every night. Your friends just kind of walk into your house and are like, 'Hey, we're here!,' and they're all kind of like one family, I guess."

This may be a different way of doing things than many Americans are used to, but Christina Kent emphasized that there were similarities there as well.

"Our house is kind of a revolving door, we have a lot of people come over. It's very inviting and welcoming so I don't think that would be too much of a culture shock for her," added Christina.

When asked about her most memorable experience in South Africa, however, Adelle alluded to the power of travel that goes far be-

yond recreation and souvenirs.

"Probably going through the informal settlements. So the government kind of kicked everyone out of their houses to take the land ... so these people went and built all these houses stacked on top of each other and they're just one-room houses," said Kent. "And we just saw kids running around in the street ... these were kids I saw at wrestling practice the night before and they seemed like normal kids ... but then we get there and see their house and it's just a little shack, like sheet metal, so that was probably the most memorable experience of the trip."

While this trip likely wraps up an incredibly busy few months for Kent - who has been home in Cottage Grove for only a matter of days this summer - her experiences in South Africa will surely help her for years to come in her long-term goal of becoming an Olympian.



PHOTO C/O CHRISTINA AND ADELLE KENT

Kent (right) and some of her fellow wrestlers with a statue of Nelson Mandela.

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