



REGION 5 ALL STAR TRIP TO GERMANY 2006

Guten Tag,

The Region 5 trip to Germany was an unqualified success. We trained with the Gymnasts from a club in Friedberg, a town outside of Augsburg. The club was built by some investors who built it as a sports club with soccer, tennis, and of course gymnastics. The gym was good sized, with pits and good equipment. The German coaches all had 'day' jobs, and coached at the end of a long work day. The girls worked out 2 or 3 times a week for 3 hours each day. Their levels were from beginner optional to perhaps level 8/9. They had a few younger girls that really showed promise. Interestingly, they compete using FIG rules, and FIG specs for bars. Needless to say, our girls had to change bar settings to swing bars.

We arrived in Munich, and took a train to Augsburg. Parents drove to our hotel to pick us up to transport us to the club for our first work out. We had our girls go through a warm up on the floor exercise mat, and their gymnasts followed along. We could see the various levels of the gymnasts, and our coaches quickly got into the coaching mode. It was so much fun watching John, Dan, Jeff, Dawn, Tom, and Marco help the girls. Language barriers did not seem to be a big problem, as many of the girls understood some English, and our coaches were very good at charades. Marco spoke to the girls in his very own special language that he made up on the spot, and the girls just followed him around the gym. Casey Wright spent time with the German girl's optional floor routines, improving their choreography. She did a wonderful job of improving their routines, and you could see the excitement in the girls.

The next day we took the bus to the gym and worked out again, sharing ideas and training techniques. A photographer was there to take many pictures of all the girls for their web site, and for the local paper. You can go to the web site to see more pictures: www.tsv-friedberg.de.

The club also had a boy's team with quite a few teenage boys. It was very interesting to see the reaction of our girls to the older boys entering the gym. Needless to say, the boys were back in the gym anytime our girls were around. They also showed up for bowling the last night of our stay in Augsburg. It turned into an interesting competition.

We bid good bye to our German friends and took the train back to Munich. Settled into to a nice hotel, we took time for sight seeing, and of course shopping. On a cloudy, cold day we took the train to see the Dachau Concentration Camp and Memorial Site. It was a combination of horror, and yet hope. NEVER AGAIN! We all found this experience to be emotional and educational. The sun just peaked

through the clouds when we were paying our respects at the memorials for the victims. All of us felt that this was a memorable experience.

The next day was sunny and warm for a bus trip to King Ludwig II castles. We toured the Linderhof and Neuschwanstein castles. Each was unique in style, and we were simply amazed of the grandor of each. We also stopped in a small town for a typically German lunch. We did sample lots of local German food, and enjoyed it. The adults really enjoyed the wonderful German Beer. Our trip back to Munich on the autobahn was exciting for the girls. They loved seeing the cars pass our bus at top speeds.

Back to the hotel to pack and head to the airport for our trip back home. With a 6 hour lay over in Philadelphia, we had plenty of time to share our pictures and memories. As the judge/chaperone of this trip, I can not tell you of how proud I am of our Region 5 coaches and gymnasts. Our girls and coaches were outstanding ambassadors for USA gymnastics. Trips like this will help improve communication and understanding between countries. Every little bit helps in our world today.

Auf Wiedersehen,

Sandy Oldham