

Costa Rica Overview

I don't think I've ever made a better decision. My name is Ryan Sappington and I am a member of the U18 Shattuck St. Mary's soccer team. Initially I decided not to join the 1990 Region II ODP trip to Costa Rica. However, after talking with the coaches, I decided to participate, reluctant to lose such an amazing opportunity. I don't think 18 players from about 7 or 8 different states have bonded so quickly. We played 4 games and had three training sessions over 8 days. We lost two unbelievably close games 1-0 to local youth teams stemming from professional clubs. We also tied the U18 Costa Rican National team (a pool of 30 players) 2-2, the highlight of soccer for the trip, and tied Alajuela by the same score. Apart from the soccer, this trip provided more in terms of culture, enjoyment, lifelong friendships, and learning opportunities than almost every other experience I've had through soccer. On one of the days our team ventured into the city of San Jose to perform community service at a local children's daycare for underprivileged kids from impoverished families. We played soccer, laughed, took photos, and marveled at the enthusiasm and pure joy of these youngsters. When one of the tour guides asked about their favorite professional team the playground erupted in shouts of "SAPRISSA, SAPRISSA, SAPRISSA". In about an hour, it seemed that we had some sort of influence over the lives of these children. They climbed all over our backs, begged for us to give them regional pins, and succeeded in running all over us on the field. It was an amazing experience. All of us agreed, later that night, that it had been the highlight of the tour. Combining it with breathtaking views from the top of the rainforest canopy zip line, steamy hot springs, and a chance to watch a professional game in a stadium with screaming fans, made this trip one of, if not the best experience of my life; and one that I will never forget.