

For Huskies' black and gold, a second life in Nicaragua

by Wes Frahm

Teams wearing the black and gold uniforms of Michigan Tech have taken to the playing fields and courts of Central America.

No, the Huskies didn't add another grueling bus trip to their 2008–09 schedule. The athletes are Nicaraguan youth who are now wearing uniforms and using equipment donated by Michigan Tech's Athletic and Intramural Departments.

The Nicaraguan connection was made with the help of John Gierke '84, '86, '90, a professor of geological and mining engineering and sciences and faculty advisor for intramural athletics at Michigan Tech. Gierke had made several trips to Nicaragua with Aqua Terra Tech, a Michigan Tech Enterprise team, to improve community water supplies.

There he met Moises Guillen, a staff member with the organization Wisconsin/Nicaragua Partners of the Americas.

"Moises helped us with our fieldwork and drove us around," said Gierke. "The last time I saw him, he told me about his new responsibility for creating sports leagues and asked if we had any old equipment we might donate."

The intramural department came up with plenty of used equipment: mainly footballs, volleyballs, soccer balls, and basketballs.

Athletic Director Suzanne Sanregret '93, '06 also presented Gierke with boxes of older uniforms that were in good shape but no longer being used.

Sanregret was thrilled to find a new home for the old uniforms. "It was a perfect fit," she said. "We were very happy to see them go for a good cause."

Gierke hauled the items to Stevens Point, Wisconsin. The Wisconsin National Guard transported them from there to Managua, Nicaragua's capital city.

With a little tailoring to suit the smaller frames of the Nicaraguan athletes, the Tech jerseys and shorts proved fully functional. The volleyball jerseys morphed into softball uniforms; the basketball jerseys are finding a place on Nicaragua's blacktop courts.

For the basketball team El Cadil, it means being able to play in the league this year.

"The kids were not allowed to play last year because the league required uniforms, and they couldn't find a sponsor," Guillen explained. "They are now known as the Michigan team. They are very grateful to Michigan Tech."

Although only a few students from Latin America have played sports for the Huskies, who knows? Maybe a Nicaraguan will be "sponsored" by Michigan Tech and dunk the game-winner in Houghton some day. ■

A Good Will Donation

Professor John Gierke and Athletic Director Suzanne Sanregret found a home for Tech's lightly used equipment and uniforms.

