

BWB AFRICA MEDIA RECAP

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Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Michael Hunt | In My Opinion

Going back to root of dreams

St. Francis - Luc Richard Mbah a Moute remembers being 15 or so when he left his home in Cameroon to attend a NBA-sponsored camp in Johannesburg.

When it was over, a woman addressed the young players from across Africa.

Mbah a Moute's English wasn't so good, so this is what he thought he heard her say:

"If you see me again, you will have made it."

Typical teenager he was, Mbah a Moute recalls rolling his eyes and thinking, *Who is this person and what is she talking about?*

Several years later, when Mbah a Moute was interviewing with Milwaukee Bucks general manager John Hammond before the 2008 draft, the memory resurfaced during their conversation.

The woman, Hammond told him, was Kim Bohuny, the NBA's vice president for international basketball operations.

Suddenly, it all made sense.

"It was funny," Mbah a Moute said Tuesday. "Later, I called her and told her I was in the NBA and that I wanted to see her, because until I saw her, the dream was not complete."

In a way, the dream is perpetuating itself.

Next week, the Bucks' small forward will become the NBA's first player to make the jump from camper to counselor in the seven years the league has been involved with Basketball Without Borders, the three-continent program from which gifted players throughout the world have a chance to experience the game from those at its highest level.

Mbah a Moute will return to Johannesburg - accompanied by the likes of Dwight Howard, Chris Bosh, Carlos Boozer and Bob Lanier - to teach and deliver the kind of message no one before had been able to make.

"That's something I'm excited about, to go and tell those kids that I was in their shoes," Mbah a Moute said. "I was sitting right there myself and thinking, 'How can I get to the NBA?'"

"I wish there was one guy when I was there who said, 'I was in your shoes.' It would have made it easier for me. It would have given me a lot more hope that, yeah, man, I can make it. If a guy who came to this camp can make it, I can make it, also."

Now, Mbah a Moute can be that guy.

The camp motivated him to the point that he left Africa a week later to enroll in a Florida high school, which led to a UCLA scholarship, which led to the NBA. From the time he picked up a basketball, he knew he wanted to be an NBA player. Before the camp, there was no one to tell him how.

"It's a dream," he said. "This past year was a dream come true, especially from my perspective, which is their perspective. The NBA seems so far.

"Here in America, you might have a kid in your neighborhood or city who went to the NBA. You might have an NBA team in your city. Where I'm from, you have to wake up at 3 in the morning to watch a game.

"To come from there and make the NBA is a dream come true. That's what I'm going to tell them, man. I'm going to tell them it's worth the work. I think I've got one of the best jobs in the world and I got that by working hard. I want them to feel the same way and have that, too."

Last February, when Bohun came to Milwaukee as part of her league tour, Mbah a Moute took her to dinner and they talked about that day in South Africa.

Suddenly, the dream was complete.

<http://www.jsonline.com/sports/bucks/54877862.html>

AOL Fanhouse

Buck's Mbah a Moute Proves NBA Outreach Really Does Matter

Tom Ziller

Sept. 1, 2009

When Luc Richard Mbah a Moute meets Africa's top youth players in Johannesburg Wednesday, he'll understand their anxiety and their hopes. Just six years ago, Mbah a Moute was in their shoes.

The Bucks forward is with an NBA contingent in South Africa this week's the Basketball Without Borders program. Cameroon native Mbah a Moute has joined Dwight Howard, Chris Bosh, Dirk Nowitzki and others on the sojourn to lead a group of 60 top African youth players in five days of basketball clinics and life-skills seminars.

In the summer of 2003, a 17-year-old Mbah a Moute was one of those campers. He credits the program with helping him get to the NBA.

Mbah a Moute said while he had watched Michael Jordan rule basketball in the 1990s, the Africa 100 program (which became Basketball Without Borders) brought the NBA into his immediate consciousness.

"It meant so much to us, to see and touch NBA players," Mbah a Moute told FanHouse before departing for Johannesburg. Among the NBA players appearing at the 2003 camp were Senegal's DeSagana Diop, Cameroon's Ruben Boumtje-Boumtje and, of course, Congolese legend Dikembe Mutombo.

Though Mbah a Moute didn't play organized basketball until age 15, the sport was a part of his life from a

young age. He'd get up early to watch Chicago Bulls games; like so many children of the '90s (myself included), Luc was enamored with MJ. The soaring leaps, the smooth shot, the ferocious energy. But the success of Mutombo and Hakeem Olajuwon made the NBA dreams of youngsters from all corners of Africa seem a bit more tangible. That's what Mbah a Moute hopes to offer in Johannesburg this week.

"I just want to bring hope, that if a kid like me can do it, so can they," he said.

Further east, some 48 youth players in Indonesia were recently given the same sort of pep talk, albeit from a non-native player. Indonesia has never produced an NBA player. But that didn't stop the players at the Indonesia Development Camp, put on by the DetEksi Basketball League and NBA Asia, from embracing Kings star Kevin Martin as one of their own.

Martin arrived in Surabaya, Indonesia, in time for the championship game of the DBL, which is Indonesia's top student league. DBL commissioner Azrul Ananda said the 5,000 fans in attendance greeted Martin by chanting his name.

For his part, Martin returned the love. The King, who brought his 75-year-old grandmother Maxine on the trip, ended the development camp by donating his \$15,000 NBA stipend back to the DBL to help pay for the students' trip to a competition in Perth, Australia.

These events may not register on fans' radars -- sure, we see the NBA Cares promos and we watch stars hand charities oversized checks during All-Star Weekend. I'm sure most of us roll our eyes at the self-faluting. *"With all that money, you're supposed to give back."*

But this outreach really does amazing things for kids all over the world. Ask Mbah a Moute. Ask the kids of the DBL.

<http://nba.fanhouse.com/2009/09/01/bucks-mbah-a-moute-proves-nba-outreach-really-does-matter/#cont>

Detroit Free Press

Africa Next Stop for Busy Maxiell
By Vince Ellis
Sept. 1, 2009

It has been a busy summer for **Jason Maxiell**.

He got married in August.

And before training camp starts in about four weeks, the Pistons' backup power forward will join NBA superstars **Chris Bosh** and Dwight Howard in Africa as part of the league's Basketball without Borders program. The five-day event begins Wednesday.

At his basketball camp recently at Joe Dumars' Fieldhouse in Shelby Township, Maxiell said he was looking forward to seeing different cultures firsthand. But it's also a working trip, as 60 of the top youth basketball players on the continent will gather to receive help with their game and advice about life.

"Basketball without Borders is a great way for the league and its players to give back to needy around the world," Bosh said in a news release. "As a role model to these youngsters, I look forward to teaching them basketball and life skills that they will be able to carry with them as they grow up."

Pistons great Bob Lanier also will make the trip.

<http://www.freep.com/article/20090901/SPORTS03/909010333/1356/SPORTS/Africa-next-stop-for-busy-Jason-Maxiell>

Dallas Morning News

In Dirk We Trust on his Long Trip
Eddie Sefko
Sept. 1, 2009

Since Dirk Nowitzki and the Mavericks had an agreement that he wouldn't play international ball this summer, he's making the most of the down time by going to South Africa as part of the NBA's Basketball Without Borders program.

It's a great trip, one that Nowitzki will draw a lot of powerful experiences from, not to mention plenty of memories.

He might also be able to conduct some business while he's down there.

Guess who else is on the trip?

Chris Bosh.

What better time for Bosh and Dirk to hang out, spread goodwill, learn about the good and the bad of the greater Johannesburg area and, just maybe, talk about the possibilities of playing together in a year or less.

Both are free agents after this season and if Nowitzki opts out and then re-signs at a lower salary-cap number, the Mavericks might still be able to swing a deal for Bosh, although he is happy playing in Toronto. The Dallas native certainly would be open to talks about returning home.

So we're putting this one on Dirk. Chat up Bosh during this trip. You never know what kind of benefits it might reap down the line.

<http://mavsblog.dallasnews.com/archives/2009/09/in-dirk-we-trust-on-his-long-trip.html>

Globe & Mail

World Away from Toronto- by Chris Grange, 9/1/09

Toronto Raptors forward Chris Bosh has never felt better about being in Toronto, a city he's worked in for six NBA seasons but in some ways is just getting to know.

"It's kind of crazy, I've never spent this much time in the summer here, it's great," he said. "I definitely feel closer to Toronto, I know that for sure."

Ironically, he's talking while packing to leave it far behind.

This week, Bosh will be in South Africa as part of the NBA's Basketball Without Borders program. During the mornings he'll be helping coach at a camp in Johannesburg with the 100 top prospects from the continent, while afternoons and evenings are reserved for community outreach programs and some sightseeing. Bosh is on the trip with the likes of fellow NBA players Dirk Nowitzki, Dwight Howard and Carlos Boozer.

"I'm curious about the world," Bosh said. "It's so big. I'm from Texas and this is what I know, but I want to see what's outside the norm, I want to go places and see how people live. ... It's a story to tell and that makes life a lot more interesting."

For Raptors fans, one of the prime storylines of the off-season has been Bosh's reaction to the rapid-fire changes that are remaking the team.

Yesterday, ESPN.com surveyed 52 basketball experts about Bosh's long-term prospects as he heads into what is expected to be his free-agent year in 2010 – only three predicted he would stay in Toronto. New York and Miami were the most popular predicted destinations.

But bound for South Africa, Bosh sounds enthusiastic about the coming season with new teammates Hedo Turkoglu, Jarrett Jack, DeMar DeRozan, Marco Belinelli and others.

"I think we're looking like a good team, and the part I like is I'm not getting too far ahead of myself," he said. "I learned that last year. I was like, 'Yeah, we're good and we're going to be good' and we weren't. I'm taking a more humble approach this year, and it's making me work harder.

"I don't want to do bad this year. I want this team do well and be successful as we can be – that's enough motivation for me right now."

He still won't go so far as to commit to signing a contract extension. Raptors president Bryan Colangelo has said that when the book is finished – that is, when his off-season moves are complete – he'll approach Bosh about re-upping before free agency.

Bosh said earlier this summer that he's not interested, but he allowed that he'd at least listen now.

"We haven't read the book yet, but when he has it ready, I'll gladly sit down and talk about it, discuss pros and cons, and come to a decision," Bosh said. "But I like that we're not sitting around, waiting around, putting all our eggs in the basket and saying we're going to wait for 2010 because we want to have [salary] cap space to get players you might not be able to sign. The do-it-now approach is very motivating, for everyone.

"We're a lot deeper and I think we have a fantastic team. If we work on the small things, we can make some noise."

Also on the trip with Bosh is Raptors assistant general manager Masai Ujiri, a coach with the Nigerian national team and long an influential figure in African basketball. Ujiri is looking forward to helping Bosh explore.

"He's very well-read, very studious and inquisitive," Ujiri said. "I love Chris for that, and this will make him much broader in terms of his knowledge."

But Ujiri isn't above using the time to work on Bosh about his future in Toronto. "I told Bryan he'd better have a flight to South Africa ready," he said.

Bosh is one of the most brand-conscious players in the NBA – he'll be releasing a CD, a DVD and an iPhone application this fall – but heading to Africa is a moment away from that.

“This is about the experience. Of course, there are branding opportunities there, but this kind of trip takes care of itself. To have a chance to make a difference somewhere else is really cool. How do these kids like basketball? Do they want to know some skills? What do they need?” he said. “Sometimes you have to put brand association to the side.”

It will also mean a break from a heavy weight-lifting regimen he's been on this summer, but he feels he's deserving of a pause before training camp starts at the end of the month.

“I've been on the grind for two straight months,” he said. “I haven't missed too many days, and the good part is you can reward yourself. I don't feel like I'm missing any time because I'll be doing stuff over there.”

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/sports/world-away-from-toronto/article1271328/>

Orlando Sentinel

Dwight Howard's Dispatch from South

Sept. 2, 2009

Dwight Howard's world tour continues this week.

The Orlando Magic center got to South Africa early this morning (yesterday, Eastern Standard Time, Johannesburg is 6 hours ahead) for the NBA's Basketball Without Borders program. Howard joins Chris Bosh, Nate Robinson, Carlos Boozer and former Basketball Without Borders camper Luc Richard Mbah a Moute among other NBA players for the five-day trip.

"I've never been to Africa, so hopefully it'll be fun," Howard said Wednesday evening. "Pretty sure the camp will be great. Kids will have fun. I've been learning stuff every day that I've been here so I just. Just hope I'll keep learning about Africa and some of my roots."

Today's schedule was pretty light, though Howard and some others visited the Apartheid Museum. Bosh tweeted on his account "Everyone should do their research on Nelson Mandela. Very great man." Howard also tweeted a photo of himself next to a Mandela display.

The camp begins tomorrow, and with the help of the NBA we'll be checking in with Howard on his experience throughout it. I'll put some audio up through the week, too.

"Oh it's a blessing just to be able to first come to Africa, and see what we can do, what basketball has done not only for us but for everybody on the planet," Howard said.

In the next few days, in addition to basketball skills camps, the players will be participating in seminars about leadership, HIV/AIDS awareness and healthy living. They'll also have various community activities and a Habitat for Humanity project.

Howard said a few people have recognized him, but South Africa isn't exactly a basketball country.

"Soccer is a big sport here," Howard said. "But we're trying to bring basketball."

http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/sports_magic/2009/09/dwight-howards-dispatch-from-south-africa.html

Sowetan

Mutombo Leads Coaching Programme to SA

Sept. 3, 2009

BASKETBALL legend Dikembe Mutombo has arrived in the country with current and other former US National Basketball Association players for the Basketball without Borders programme.

They arrived in the country on Tuesday night.

Besides coaching clinics, the week-long programme also focuses on doing community work, life-skills projects and encourages the youth to study.

Organised by the International Basketball Association and NBA, the Basketball without Borders programme starts today with Mutombo and company addressing the media in Diepsloot.

Later in the day, they will visit the Cotlands Community Centre in Soweto, which they opened in 2007 in partnership with the De Beers Foundation.

With the towering Dwight Howard also part of the NBA team, they will join the grannies from Cotlands to help plant vegetable seeds and cultivate the land. Tomorrow the NBA players and coaches, along with their guests, will take part in a Habitat for Humanity Build Day. They will be back at Kliptown Youth Trust in Soweto on Saturday. The following day, they will conduct clinics for girls at the American International School of Johannesburg. Led by former Women's National Basketball Association players Teresa Edwards and Nkeysha Sales, girls aged between 14 and 16 will take part in skill stations with the NBA players and coaches.

After the on-court action, Basketball without Borders community partner Hoops 4 Hope will run a 45-minute life-skills session for the girls focused on leading a healthy and active lifestyle.

<http://www.sowetan.co.za/Sport/Article.aspx?id=1059532>

Deseret News

Utah Jazz: Boozer Not Heading to Dallas or South Africa

Jody Gennessy, Aug. 31, 2009

Add the Dallas Mavericks to the list of NBA teams that were — and perhaps still are — interested in acquiring trade-craving Carlos Boozer.

While you're at it, scratch South Africa off of Boozer's more immediate travel itinerary.

Though it's still unclear where exactly he'll end up this NBA season, Boozer won't be going to Johannesburg this week to participate in the NBA's Basketball Without Borders program Wednesday through Sunday as was announced earlier this summer.

The Jazz power forward is a late scratch from the league's successful international outreach program due to a family emergency, an NBA source involved with the camp said on Sunday.

It wasn't announced whether Dwight Howard and Chris Bosh — Boozer's 2008 Olympic teammates — will still attend the camps with other current and former NBA players. However, Bosh posted on his Twitter account that he is leaving for South Africa today.

As for the Dallas situation, the Mavericks were among the possible Boozer suitors with whom the Jazz have talked swap this offseason, according to ESPN's Chad Ford. The NBA writer also recently reported that the Jazz have discussed possible deals with the Chicago Bulls, Miami Heat and Detroit Pistons. He didn't mention Portland, Memphis, New York, Sacramento or Houston, but Boozer's name has surfaced in rumors and reports along with those teams this summer as well.

Boozer told a radio station this summer that the Jazz informed him that he was no longer in their future plans and claimed that the franchise's management would seek a trade for him before the 2009-10 season.

Ford pointed out that the Jazz's economic situation, which has them well over the luxury-tax threshold after re-signing Paul Millsap and getting Boozer, Mehmet Okur and Kyle Korver back through player options, "has led GM Kevin O'Connor to actively pursue trades for Boozer."

Ford did not write about possible trade scenarios between Dallas and Utah.

Also this past weekend, a blog from New York-based Newsday listed Boozer as being a potential target of the Knicks if they were to work out a sign-and-trade deal with young power forward David Lee. Knicks writer Alan Hahn, however, somewhat dismissed that scenario after bringing it up.

"The Jazz, however, just made that long-term commitment to (Paul) Millsap and are over the luxury tax threshold," Hahn wrote. "It is hard to believe they would prefer to give up an all-star talent like Boozer to add a long-term deal for Lee."

Jazz general manager Kevin O'Connor is out of town and unavailable for comment.

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705326930/Utah-Jazz-Boozer-not-headed-to-Dallas-or-South-Africa.html>

City of Johannesburg News

Learn about Life at Basketball Camp

Written by Lesego Madumo Friday, 04 September 2009

A LARGE contingent of American basketball stars is in Joburg for the Basketball Without Borders (BWB) training camp and outreach programme, which is being held at the American School of Johannesburg, near Diepsloot.

The five-day basketball camp started on Tuesday, 2 September and runs until Sunday, 6 September. It is designed to equip young basketball athletes with playing skills through camp competitions, drills and scrimmages.

BWB is held annually in Beijing, China; in Mexico City, Mexico; and in Johannesburg. The training programme is run by luminary basketball players and coaches from the US's National Basketball Association (NBA).

This year's camp features about 60 athletes from 23 African countries who are all under 19 years old; they were selected to participate by the International Basketball Federation (Fiba) based on their skill, leadership abilities and dedication to the sport.

BWB forms part of the NBA and Fiba's global basketball development programme for young people, which uses the sport to influence positive social change in the areas of education, health and wellness through promoting friendship and diversity.

It is co-organised by Basketball South Africa (BSA), the NBA and Fiba and this year's camp is supported by Nike, EA Sports, ESPN, South African Airways, Spalding as well as Sprite, BWB's marketing partners.

More than sport

"Basketball Without Borders is a unique programme in that it emphasizes more than basketball skills in top young talent," says Zoran Radovic, Fiba's development director.

According to Radovic, through BWB, campers benefit from the highest level of basketball instruction and they are equipped with the tools to make a positive impact among their peers and become role models in their communities.

At camp, athletes are divided into teams that unite race, religion and nationality, in a bid to promote friendship and diversity. They are then trained by NBA players and coaches and compete against each other.

"Basketball Without Borders helps us to grow the game of basketball and bring attention to important social issues that affect communities around the world," says Kathleen Behrens, the NBA's executive vice-president for social responsibility and player programmes.

"We know that by teaching the values of the game [like] teamwork, sportsmanship, hard work and healthy living our current and former players and coaches can also make a lasting impact on communities in need."

Life skills

Throughout the week, NBA players have been partnering with local community groups to lead daily life skills sessions focusing on the importance of education, leadership, character development, health and wellness.

The camp is pivotal because it teaches young basketball players the importance of hard work, dedication, teamwork and sportsmanship, says George Raveling, the global director of Nike Basketball sports marketing.

"These are all vital attributes to the young campers, which will serve them well in the future both on and off the court and we are proud to be working with the NBA and Fiba to promote these values."

Motivational and life skills seminars at camp are shaped to promote education, character development, a healthy lifestyle and leadership. There is an emphasis on HIV/Aids awareness and prevention.

The first life skills seminar that the youngsters attended was on camp orientation, including the rules of the camp and the structure of the coming days.

Former camper

Former participant Luc Mbah a Moute says the camp was pivotal in his quest to soar to basketball stardom. Moute was only 16 years old in 2003, when he attended the first camp. Six years later, he is the first former camper to return to BWB Africa as an NBA player. Moute is from Cameroon.

BWB forms part of the NBA's global basketball development and community outreach curriculum. The aim is to use sport to grow a culture of social change among young people.

Campers are trained by basketball legend Dikembe Mutombo, leading a contingent of NBA/WNBA players, coaches and US Olympians, including Dwight Howard, Chris Bosh, Dirk Nowitzki and Carlos Boozer.

Through NBA Cares, the league's social responsibility initiative, NBA players and coaches participate in community outreach programmes with local non-profit organisations. During these outreach programmes, NBA/WNBA players and coaches focus on education, grassroots basketball development and HIV/Aids education.

Since the inception of BWB, the NBA and its partners have created more than 40 places around the world where families and children can live, learn or play.

A BSA girl's clinic will be held on Sunday, 6 September, led by former WNBA players Teresa Edwards and Nkeysha Sales. Girls aged between 14 and 16 will participate in skills training sessions with the NBA players and coaches.

Hoops4Hope will lead the BWB campers in daily life skills' seminars, which will focus on HIV and Aids, and give tips on how to lead a healthy lifestyle.

BWB is the NBA and Fiba's global basketball development programme; it takes place at the American International School of Johannesburg and in other countries, every year. Camp started in Johannesburg on 2 September and will close on Sunday 6, September.

<http://www.joburg.org.za/content/view/4269/266/#ixzz0Q8giOjTo>

Toronto Sun

Bosh's trip to South Africa a life-changing experience

By [STEVE BUFFERY](#)

Last Updated: 5th September 2009, 2:55am

Between sirens blaring in the background and his constant yawning over the phone, Chris Bosh doesn't really know whether he's coming or going.

"Sorry, man," Bosh says, laughing, while sitting on a bus on the way to the U.S. Embassy in Johannesburg, South Africa. "I'm just incredibly tired."

The fatigue is understandable. Since arriving in South Africa last Tuesday as part of the NBA's Basketball Without Borders program, Bosh hardly has had time to stretch his legs. It has been a whirlwind, with daily basketball clinics for local hoops stars and visits to such landmarks as the Apartheid Museum. Yesterday, Bosh and company helped out with a Habitat for Humanity project and visited an orphanage for children with AIDS -- two experiences he never will forget. In fact, the Raptors star believes that yesterday was a day that will change his life.

"I'll never look at things the same way," he said. "You think of poverty in Toronto and some of the rough areas there. There's no comparison. People here live in shacks -- houses with four corners and a metal sheet for a roof. We worked on this house for this family and it was a huge upgrade for them. But if you and I were asked to live in something like that, well, we wouldn't like it at all. But these people were actually happy."

Today, Bosh will visit Soweto, the infamous Johannesburg township described as one of the worst slums on the continent, the site of the 1976 uprising in which 566 people killed during an anti-government protest.

"Apparently there's even more poverty there than what we've seen so far, which I can't even imagine," said Bosh. "But I have to see it."

Bosh, in fact, is anxious for as many people as possible to see what he has seen so far. To that end has downloaded some pics on to his Twitter account (<http://twitter.com/ChrisBOSH>).

An even more profound shock to his system than the poverty in Johannesburg was the visit to the orphanage, and for once, Bosh was at a loss for words.

"It's very hard for me to describe the feeling of visiting there," he said. "These were very small kids, maybe kindergarten kids. Maybe not even that old -- 2-5 years. Kids living with AIDS.

"But the crazy thing was, they were smiling, and laughing and having a good time. It puts a lot of things into perspective."

It certainly has for Bosh, who will return to Toronto in a week or so to prepare for the upcoming NBA season -- a season many have described as a make-or-break campaign for the big Texan in terms of whether he stays with the Raptors after next season.

Between trips to South Africa and teammate Jose Calderon's camp in Spain, Bosh said that he has worked harder than ever in the off-season. As for the much-discussed possibility of a contract extension, Bosh, who is heading into the final year of his current deal, reiterated his feelings that he is open to talk with the Raptors, but said the bottom line is, he wants to know that, in the future, he is playing for a contender.

This off-season, general manager Bryan Colangelo has made a number of moves in a bid to improve last year's squad, bringing in such notables as Hedo Turkoglu, first-round draft pick DeMar DeRozan and Jarrett Jack.

"A chance to win, that's all it comes down to," Bosh said. "That's all I ask for -- to have a chance to win a championship."

As usual, Bosh said a key to any success will come down to how much centre Andrea Bargnani continues to improve. The big Italian averaged career highs of 15.4 points, 5.3 rebounds, 1.24 blocked shots and 31.4 minutes last season and signed a five-year, \$50-million US extension this summer.

"He's pretty much raised the bar for himself with his good play at the end of last year," Bosh said. "I think he can be a tremendous help to us if he continues to play like that."

http://www.torontosun.com/sports/columnists/steve_buffery/2009/09/05/10757671-sun.html

The New York Times

Bringing the N.B.A. a Little Closer to Africa

By HARVEY ARATON

The first-time counselor remembered exactly where he sat as a wide-eyed camper. He pointed to the spot and informed his audience that he was in that very space just six years ago.

The campers, about 70 strong, responded as if Luc Mbah a Moute had told them a joke.

"They laughed, like they couldn't believe it was possible," he said.

On the telephone from Johannesburg, Mbah a Moute (pronounced BAH-ah-MOO-tay) said he could understand the youthful skepticism, notwithstanding the living proof that one — if only one of a very large number — could make the leap from teenage African camper to N.B.A. millionaire and missionary.

Mbah a Moute, a Cameroonian rookie with the Milwaukee Bucks last season, was back in Africa last week as the first alumnus of the camp, which is part of the N.B.A.'s Basketball Without Borders program, to return to it as an N.B.A. player and counselor.

"The kids here are not like Americans because to them the N.B.A. is so far away," said Mbah a Moute, a 6-foot-8 forward. "I remember that feeling. Even though some Africans have made it, you can't actually grasp the possibility until you leave the continent."

What were the odds for Mbah a Moute's even being chosen to attend the first such camp in 2003 as a gangly 16-year-old from Yaoundé, Cameroon's capital? He didn't play basketball until age 14, when he and his twin, Emmanuel Bidias a Moute, began shooting at a backboard and rim on a streetlight pole in the Etoa-Meki neighborhood of central Yaoundé.

Within two years, Mbah a Moute was the best youth player in his country, with an invitation for the N.B.A. camp at the American International School of Johannesburg.

There, an African legend, Dikembe Mutombo, schooled him on the manly art of boxing out and moving on. Three weeks later, Mbah a Moute boarded a plane to Central Florida to attend prep school at Montverde Academy, on his way to a scholarship and a three-year run at U.C.L.A.

"It all happened so fast, but it changed my life," Mbah a Moute said before flying from New York to Johannesburg, where he joined Mutombo, Dwight Howard and Chris Bosh, among others.

Mutombo is a patron saint of African basketball, and Howard and Bosh are N.B.A. All-Stars, but Mbah a Moute was the most luminous presence at last Wednesday's get-acquainted session.

"I've been in any number of situations where basketball players and other athletes are talking to teenagers, and Luc, as much as anyone I've seen, had those kids sitting at the edge of their seats," said Richard Lapchick, a civil rights activist and longtime sports watchdog, who joined the N.B.A. group in Johannesburg. "It's an old phrase, I know, but when he got up, you could hear a pin drop."

Mbah a Moute is not the first N.B.A. player from Cameroon; Georgetown's Ruben Boumtje-Boumtje had a short run with Portland early this decade. By the N.B.A.'s count, 23 Africans have played in the league, including six last season. Three more were drafted in June, including the Tanzanian center Hasheem Thabeet, taken second in the first round out of Connecticut by Memphis.

Insisting he has retired after 19 N.B.A. seasons, Mutombo said by telephone not to forget Christian Eyenga, the last pick of the first round by Cleveland, from Mutombo's native Congo. "Since we first came, the quality has improved so much," he said.

When Yao Ming landed in Houston in 2002, China was forecast to be the next major talent pipeline, based on its huge basketball-loving population. But Chinese players, limited in part by conservative coaching techniques, have not yet demonstrated the improvisational and freewheeling athleticism necessary to survive in the American game.

Africa is beset with its own issues, mainly a lack of resources and quality coaching, but there apparently is an abundance of talent waiting to be offered a serious alternative to soccer.

"I remember the report back from our first camp," said Kathy Behrens, the N.B.A.'s executive vice president for social responsibility and player programs. "It said these kids are wonderful athletically but woefully unsound and raw."

Ever watchful of the world from his perch in Manhattan's Olympic Tower, David Stern, the N.B.A. commissioner, said: "In Africa, we're beginning to see new countries challenging the traditional powers like Angola — the Ivory Coast, Tunisia. I've said this before: Africa could be a continent as important to the development of players as Eastern and Western Europe combined."

Going against the grain of America's basketball elite, Mbah a Moute said he hoped the game would foremost be an educational vehicle for African players.

"Let's face it, what you hope from a camp like this one is that a few of these kids can make it into a college program, let alone the N.B.A.," he said.

Soon after hitting the sport's global radar, Mbah a Moute drew interest from European club teams. His father, Camille Moute a Bidias, the general manager of the Cameroonian national employment fund, said he was not thrilled with the idea of either of his sons (Emmanuel followed Luc to the United States to play collegiately) taking a job in professional basketball at 16.

"I knew Luc had talent, but I didn't know he had that much talent," Moute a Bidias said in French by telephone from Yaoundé. "But I told him, 'If you are going to play basketball, then you have to go to America and go to school.'"

Mbah a Moute said he promised his father he would get his degree in international development from U.C.L.A., and his father said he would hold him to it.

"I didn't want to bother him his first season, but absolutely, absolutely," he said.

Lapchick said Mbah a Moute's speech to the campers was firm: basketball should not be seen by them solely as a path to a pot of gold but as a means of expanding the mind. That night, Mbah a Moute told Lapchick he had been rehearsing all summer. When he finished, the campers rewarded their most successful alumnus with a standing ovation.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/09/sports/basketball/09nba.html?_r=1&ref=sports

Orlando's FOX affiliate

Basketball Without Borders Tour

Dwight Howard took part in the African edition of the [NBA's](#) global basketball development and community outreach program, Basketball Without Borders, at the American International School of Johannesburg.

The four-day camp united the top 60 young basketball players from the continent to promote basketball and encourage positive social change in the areas of education, health and wellness.

The top youth, 19 and under, players spanning the continent, as selected by the NBA, FIBA and participating federations, came together to train under [NBA players](#) and coaches, and compete against their peers.

Campers were divided into teams independent of race, religion or nationality in an effort to promote friendship and diversity.

In addition to basketball instruction, NBA players and coaches partnered with local community groups to lead daily life-skills seminars that promoted leadership, character development, health and wellness throughout the four-day event.

In addition, through NBA Cares, the league's social responsibility initiative, NBA players and coaches participated in extensive community outreach programs with local non-profit organizations including the creation of places for children and families to live learn or play.

Since 2005, NBA Cares has created more than 400 live, learn or play centers around the world.

http://www.myfoxorlando.com/dpp/sports/nba/magic/090909_Basketball_Without_Borders_tour

The OC Register

Lakers' Mbenga makes sentimental journey

The Lakers Center returns to Africa for the first time in 13 years with NBA's Basketball Without Borders program

DJ Mbenga stared out the window of the airplane and wondered how he would feel when the plane landed. Would he be nervous or anxious?

Was he scared to set foot on the continent that used to be home but became a death sentence? Or would he be happy to be back, within reach of family members who still live in Congo or worried that childhood memories would cloud his mission?

As it turned out, the Lakers reserve center felt only a twinge of emotional baggage on his return to Africa, the first time he has stepped foot in that part of the world in more than a dozen years. He was a bit anxious, but happy to have a chance to help disadvantage boys and girls through the NBA's Basketball Without Borders program.

"This was emotional for me, for sure," Mbenga said from Johannesburg, South Africa. "It's been a while since I was here, so for me to come back here, it has a lot of memories. It makes me understand how blessed I am."

Once he got his bearings, Mbenga said he put aside his memories and whatever fears he might have had, and focused on teaching youngsters the basics of basketball and life skills through the NBA program. Mbenga was one of 10 players, including Chris Bosh and Dwight Howard, who traveled to South Africa this past week for the NBA's third such global camp.

These players took part in several community outreach events, such as a life skills seminars dealing with HIV/AIDS education, talking to kids about living healthy lifestyles, showing them how to sustain a food garden and helping build homes through Habitat for Humanity.

"I came from a very different background, so this made me understand how I was blessed growing up. But growing up, I saw people like this, so I know what kind of life they have. And what they have is hope, a lot of hopes."

Mbenga's perspective of Africa takes on a different hue when you know his life story.

His father worked for the government in the Congo and the family was well off, what he calls "blessed." But when Mbenga and his brother were in their late teens, a new regime took over and jailed those who had worked for the previous leader. Mbenga's father was one of them. He and his brother were jailed as well.

The Mbenga brothers were jailed for only a brief time, until their father negotiated their release, but a short time later, their father was dead. Mbenga eventually fled to Belgium, where he received asylum, and while living in a refugee center, discovered basketball.

Now he is trying to help others learn the sport that has, what he says, given him an opportunity to live comfortably in the United States.

During his week in Africa, he and other NBA and WNBA players worked with 60 prospective players from 23 African countries, who were picked by the International Basketball Federation based on their skill, leadership skills and dedication to the sport. The aim is to use sport to promote a culture of social change among young people.

Former UCLA star Luc Mbah a Moute from Cameroon said the camp was pivotal in developing his basketball skills, a reason why he is in the NBA today. He was 16 years old when he attended his first camp in 2003.

Mbenga said he might have started his basketball career sooner had there been such a program when he was younger. As it was, Mbenga didn't start playing basketball until he was 17 years old in Belgium.

"Coming here has a lot of meaning for me. A lot, a lot," Mbenga said. "It's been emotional. The best part? To see these kids laugh is always a good thing ... and to speak to them from my heart."

<http://www.oregister.com/articles/mbenga-basketball-lot-2558609-africa-nba>

BROADCAST:

The FAN 590 Toronto:

Live on-air interview with Chris Bosh on The Morning Show- 9/3/09 at 7:20 AM EDT