



Back in the USA!

November 21, 2005 - BCI Edge has returned from China after a successful 17-day exhibition basketball tour with seven wins, three losses, and one tie*. The team participated in 11 games, three youth clinics, and many ceremonial events during the tour. Each game was a new opportunity to inspire and excite fans in a buzzing, sold-out arena, with four to eight thousand Chinese cheering us on. At every game, the Chinese fans cheered politely for both teams. After each game, BCI Edge players were swarmed by children and adults who wanted autographs on everything from clothing to paper money. Our basketball performance reflects both this welcoming, positive affirmation of our mission and the quality of professional-level basketball talent we brought to the tour.

During the flight to China, some BCI Edge players were mistakenly assigned to center seats. The crew and other passengers kindly arranged for us to move to aisle and bulkhead seats! A little leg room did the trick; we were well prepared and won our first two games upon arrival, against Yao Ming's former home club team, the Shanghai Sharks!

Getting Ready to Play

With a packed travel schedule, BCI Edge had little opportunity to practice during the tour. Each game day before the crowds arrived, we familiarized ourselves with the game facility and had a "shoot around." Then daily "team time" energized our players spiritually. A bond developed among new and veteran BCI Edge players that helped to give us a winning attitude based on integrity and fellowship. As some of our younger players, who had not traveled overseas before, experienced culture shock, the seasoned players stepped in to help make the tour more comfortable for them. BCI Edge leaders were delighted by the camaraderie and vulnerability that developed between our players. We became a truly inspirational team.

The Clinics

We arrived at our first planned youth clinic in Rugao expecting about 20 - 30 school children. As we drove up in our tour bus, we were greeted by a 40-piece marching band and 75 children waving fresh flowers! We were thrilled that the Rugao children gave us such a royal welcome, but nothing could have prepared us for what happened next. Around the corner, by the basketball court, more than 1000 uniformed kids were waiting for us! They swarmed us, waving and smiling. It was an unexpected but wonderful welcome. We did shooting drills with the oldest children, while younger children from the primary bi-lingual experiment school enjoyed practicing their English skills with BCI Edge! The next evening, at the ceremonial dinner, the Mayor of Rugao said, "we are so happy to have BCI Edge in our city, especially because at the clinic we could see in their eyes that they loved our children."

On November 2, which was originally planned as a day of rest, BCI Edge conducted a successful youth clinic in Wuxi, at the Olympic Sports Training School. Roughly 60 middle- and high-school girls enjoyed shooting drills and assistance with their game. The clinic participants



then showed up at both games against the Jiangsu Dragons, who were 35-3 last year, to support BCI Edge, but they didn't know how to cheer on US players. They soon learned to yell, "Defense!" and "Go BCI Edge!" at the right times. We were thrilled to have our very own "cheerleaders"!

Standing on Ceremony

BCI Edge was honored to be invited to many ceremonial dinners during our tour, hosted by the mayor or other prominent city officials. The dinners consisted of thirty unique dishes, served in succession. Noodles and rice provided our players with needed carbohydrates at the end of each meal, while delicacies like pigeon head, which tastes a little like chicken, were warily appreciated. Familiar US-style fast food filled in when BCI Edge needed high calories and a taste of home. BCI Edge also participated in many welcome ceremonies, where enthusiastic fans gathered to honor our presence in their cities. Even when we traveled with their professional Chinese teams, we attracted large crowds on our own!

An Exciting Finish

Our last game, against Sahngdong Kingston, was especially exciting. Between the aggressive opposing players' behavior and surprising referee calls that threw us for a loop, we had lost to this team once before. BCI Edge players knew that winning our final game would require us to pull strength from personal integrity and faith. We knew that we could not allow the Kingston players and officials to distract us from playing our best game. Because of our players' character and skill, BCI Edge pulled it together. With just two seconds left on the clock and Sahngdong Kingston ahead by two points, the officials called a jump ball. The possession arrow gave us the ball. BCI Edge then hit a three-point shot to win the game 95 - 94, as the buzzer went off!

Homeward Bound

As BCI Edge traveled back to the US, our players were naturally exhausted. The tour was packed with strenuous physical and personal growth opportunities; BCI Edge approached every opportunity with full force. Armed with a refreshed commitment to the BCI Edge mission, a new appreciation for cultural differences, and gifts for family and friends from the Shanghai's famous open air market, our team is happy to be home.

A New Invitation

BCI Edge was invited to return to China in 2006. Before we left, a contract was signed with the Jiangsu Basketball Association (Yuguang Basketball Club) for a 16-day tour next fall. Alex Tan of Sports Ambassadors, the organization with whom we partnered, said, "I am amazed how the response from Jiangsu towards BCI is very encouraging and positive... I will keep my eyes and ears open towards [new tournament possibilities]."

Once again, we are grateful to the Chinese Government, the Basketball Federation, Sports Ambassadors, and our dedicated supporters and fans both at home and abroad!