

## ECA Sports Envoys Discover the Love of Basketball in Algeria

NBA Legend Player and Olympic gold medalist Sam Perkins, WNBA pioneer and All Star Andrea Stinson, and WNBA standout and Junior Olympic gold medalist Shameka Christon conducted four basketball clinics in Algeria for over 600 youths between the ages of 7 and 17 on November 9-13, 2005.

As Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' sports envoys, the three American athletes taught basketball skills and gave inspirational speeches to 500 youths, all members of local basketball leagues, at public gyms in Algiers and the neighboring town of Tipaza. They also conducted a clinic for 100 of Algeria's top high school athletes at the National Sports High School of Draria.



Former NBA player Sam Perkins surrounded by happy basketball fans at Algeria's National Sports High School of Draria



Shameka Christon warms up with young basketball players in Tipaza

The four-day program kicked off with a reception at the Residence for the Ministry of Youth and Sports officials, Algerian Basketball Federation (ABF) representatives, league and high school coaches, and young Algerian basketball players. ABF President Mustapha Berraf and ABF Vice President Rabah Bouarifi opened the first clinic in a large public gym in downtown Algiers. The American stars dazzled an audience made up of parents, spectators, and media representatives as they taught their skills and interacted with the young Algerian players and their coaches. At each of the four clinics, the Americans reminded the Algerian players that with hard work and devotion to the values of sportsmanship, basketball had

changed their lives by opening up new horizons and opportunities. At the end of each of the four clinics, Algerian players received a certificate and a pair of new basketball shoes given by Reebok.

Prominent newspapers and the national radio and television covered the initiative extensively. The clinics were filmed for later broadcast to nationwide audiences of over three million people. As a result, millions of Algerians had an opportunity to learn of the visit of the three American basketball stars to their country, where thousands of people of all ages closely follow W/NBA games by satellite. The event was a highlight of the U.S. Embassy's public diplomacy efforts.

Asking them to keep in touch and to return to Algeria soon, participants at the clinics clamored for autographs, e-mail addresses, and pictures with the American stars. WNBA star Andrea Stinson expressed to the press her joy about being able to work with the young Algerian basketball fans. "Through these clinics, we would like young basketball players to benefit from our experience in this sport, and we are delighted with the success of this initiative!" she said.



WNBA player Andrea Stinson demonstrating basketball techniques to young fans in Algiers