

Heading South of the Equator to be a Better AT

“As a student and former athlete I am constantly under the microscope and always performing a skill in order to please my supervisor or coach. I was competing because I loved it, but I was constantly worried about what others thought of me. As a student, I'm terrified that I will do something wrong and I look for praise when I do something right.” Emily Evans, an athletic training student at Murray State University in Murray, KY wrote these words when asked how the AIA Principle, *Audience of One* impacted her life during a recent educational mission trip to Cape Town, South Africa. The main question asked of those who listen to *Audience of One* is, who or what do I worship? “This lesson taught me that my performance ultimately doesn't matter unless I'm giving God the glory. He is the only one I should be worried about pleasing,” said Emily. She went on to write, “I have taken something from each principle that we learned...as a reminder that this world is so much bigger than myself.”

Emily was part of a team of three certified athletic trainers and two AT students who served athletes from South Africa and the United States participating in an AIA Ultimate Training Camp. The athletes spent their days learning what God's Word says about life and sport, then applied those truths in intense competition. As the athletes tackled the tough issues of blending faith and sport together on the field of competition, the athletic trainers and AT students sought to apply the Principles to how they serve others through sports medicine. Reagan Falduti, a certified athletic trainer and alumnus of Grand Canyon University, said, “Each principle challenged me in a different way. Our discussion questions were the most impactful, they really made me think and evaluate. I have more confidence in my abilities and have been challenged to be the best I can be. I learned how to live in this profession with Christ truly the center.”



An Ultimate Training Camp (UTC) culminates in a 20 hour athletic marathon called the SPECIAL, which is designed to allow the athletes to apply all five Principles in one grueling test. This unique athletic event culminates in a hill run called Golgotha, where each athlete carries their own cross while spending time with God thinking about what He did for them on the cross and what they've experienced during the week. The Golgotha course in Cape Town has a cross strategically placed at the end where the athletes were asked to lay anything they needed to give up to God at the foot of the cross. This was a powerful and life changing event for everyone!

The AIA Sports Performance AT team was blessed to only have to deal with muscle cramps during the UTC with no lasting injuries. After the SPECIAL the team visited four of the South African athletes in their township of Khayelitsha (Cay-a-let-sha). The team spent time stretching and rubbing out their muscles...they were sore after the SPECIAL...and spending time in their world. Their township is what people here in the U.S. would call the projects...but much worse. A little dance party broke out as the team made new friends in the township. While the American AT's learned they couldn't dance, they



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did something far more important by building relationships for God's kingdom. The four athletes from Khayelitsha all said their lives were changed by the UTC. It was life changing for the AIA Sports Performance team to spend time with these young men of God, but also to get out of their comfort zones as AT's and students. When the team left they heard, "you have changed our lives, please come back."

Rachel Rivers, an AT student from Erskine College shared two highlights of her tour, "One highlight was when the Lord used the wall sits to break my prideful spirit and remind me who I live my life for, Him. The second highlight was when we went into the townships. It was just amazing to see the heart of the people and the community" Emily shared this thought from the visit to the township, "Going into the township to take care of some of our athletes from the Special--to see the joy they find in each day and that they would give us anything if we needed it even though they have next to nothing." Emily went on to say, "I learned patience and how to listen. By working with athletes who have never been exposed to an athletic trainer and who have trouble explaining things at times, I became a stronger listener and more patient when it comes to understanding."



Jessica Gaubatz, a certified athletic trainer from the University of Nevada-Reno said, "In the hours that followed the completion of SPECIAL, many of the athletes shared the mental battles they were fighting over the course of the 20 hours. I had the privilege of witnessing many of these battles. Christ shown through the pain, the bruises, the tears, and the cramps, and revealed His strength by sustaining the athletes. It was a beautiful thing to see the surrender as each athlete met his/her breaking point! There were so many moments where the AIA staff and athletic trainers were in tears as we watched these athletes transformed through Christ as they let go of themselves. Rachel mentioned the moment where she was doing wall sits for 15 minutes. What she didn't mention is that by minute 10, everyone in the gym had noticed that she and Theo were still going (while all other athletes had sat down). And when the song Child of God came on, Rachel sat on the wall with outstretched arms, SINGING!!"

Jessica went on to say, "It was a tumultuous 20 hours for all of us. The staff was just as sleep deprived as the athletes. (I slept for 14 hours the following night!) But as we met together at the conclusion of the SPECIAL, we were vulnerable with our experiences, vulnerable about how God has spoken in our lives, and joyful that we were able to experience this in beautiful South Africa!"



For more information and stories from this tour visit our [teamblog](#).