

Warm hearts on a cold day  
Dec. 13, 2006  
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She may be only 8 years old, but Sarah Michelet knows her soccer -- especially her North Carolina women's soccer.

She attends almost all of the Tar Heels' home games.

She was at the College Cup when they won the national title, again, this year.

She's a pen pal of UNC's Ariel Harris.

And she's even talked to coach Anson Dorrance.

On Saturday, Sarah got to see the Tar Heels again. Only this time, she got to show them her skills on the field.

A handful of former Tar Heels dedicated five hours of their weekend to hosting a soccer clinic for about 40 girls ages 8-13 at Finley Fields to benefit Carolina for Kibera, an international nonprofit organization that works with officials in Nairobi, Kenya, to promote youth leadership and improve the living conditions of Kibera, the largest slum of East Africa.

"This just in itself, what they are doing, it's just incredible," said Sarah's father Phillip Michelet. "One thing I've been trying to teach my kids is that there are others without things. I think this is great that they're making it more than just a camp."

Founded in 2001 by Rye Barcott, a UNC alum and current U.S. Marine Corps officer, Carolina for Kibera has been recognized by Time magazine and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as one of the frontrunners in global health organizations.

As part of Carolina for Kibera's philosophy of personal empowerment, one of the organization's four programs in Kibera, the "CFK Youth Soccer Association" brings together youth members of the community to play soccer, but with the stipulation that they will help clean up their community.

The philosophy has worked. More than 2,000 young players in Kibera participate in the soccer league, and all are contributing in the effort to revitalize their home.

The UNC soccer clinic on Saturday not only reflected some of what Carolina for Kibera has established overseas, but the entire proceeds went to benefit the organization's programs, which include a healthcare facility, trash clean-up and a women's center.

And those who contributed to the cause seemed impressed and heartened by a nonprofit they knew little about.

"I learned about CFK through this program, and it sounds like a terrific cause," said Dan Heck, whose daughter, Ranie, participated in the clinic. "I like causes that are very much active in the communities they're serving, which this is. So, I'm glad to support it."

Kendall Fletcher, a former UNC defender and current member of the U.S. National Team player pool, put together the coaching end of the event -- an organizational skill she has learned to love and hopes to continue.

"I love to do it," she said. "I just thought this was something I could do for the area around here and for Kibera."

The young players in the clinic got the one-on-one attention that most of them usually give Carolina when they're in the Fetzer Field stands, the kind where they're shouting the Tar Heels' names and cheering them on.

The UNC players didn't need words to understand how much the young girls were enjoying their time. Ear-to-ear grins and eyes that virtually had to be peeled off the Tar Heels said it all.

"My favorite station was where you do one-on-one with each other," Sarah said. "It helps you do your skills, and it's just like playing a real game but not with everybody there."

But, in all the fun, participants were charged with one requirement: They had to cheer.

"Go, Makina! Go, Makina! Go, Makina, go! Makina Rocks!" echoed from one end of the field.

"Sooowwwweto!" was shouted from another area.

"Lindi! Lindi!" was screamed in between cabbage-patch dancing moves from another.

And, from an opposite corner of the field, human formations that spelled "Kianda" were coordinated with precision.

The cheers were in dedication to the various regions of the Kibera slum, in which about 600,000 people of numerous ethnicities are housed in an area the size of New York's Central Park -- a perfect setting for tension and violence, not for play.

Integration in the slum is one of CFK's goals, and having the girls participate in group-integration cheers is the UNC players' way of showing their "unified spirit."

"We want to make it fun for them, but it's also meant to build their group unity," Fletcher said. "The cheers kind of accomplish all the goals."

After the drills, the players took a break for Kibera 101 where the UNC players showed the girls the meaning behind the drills and cheers.

To cap off the day, the girls put their new skills to use in a scrimmage, showing their parents why standing out in the 40-degree weather was so worthwhile.

Some soccer, some Tar Heels, a lot of laughs and a great cause, they noted. What could be better?