

# BFS Trip Report: Guatemala City

**W**hen I got the phone call in August inviting me to give a clinic in Guatemala City, Guatemala, I was a little hesitant. Although my career as a professional tennis player for the Netherlands had taken me to many Third World countries, this trip would be different. This was the first time I would be looked upon as an American, and in these troubled times that is not always a good thing. I guess my insecurity showed, because the office staff at BFS cheerfully began ribbing me about how dangerous it was to fly overseas. But the truth is, giving a BFS clinic in Guatemala City was a fantastic experience.

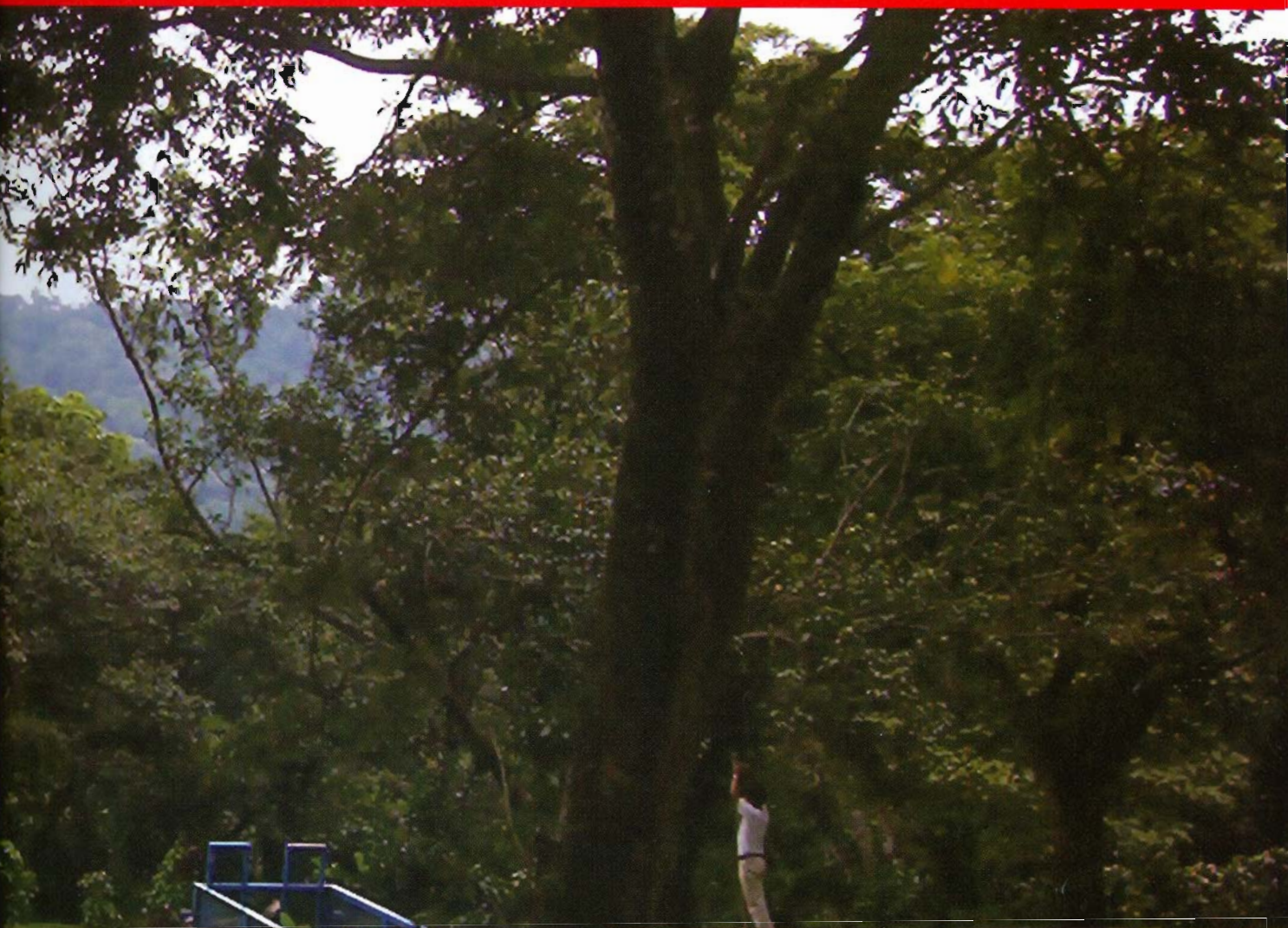


**Roeland Brateanu • BFS Clinician**

The sport club sponsoring the clinic is called Sporta. It is owned by Carlos Ibarra and Ricardo Rodriguez, and the general manager is Claudia de Smith. The gym caters to women who stay home to take care of their kids, and it offers today's most popular classes: spinning, cardio, karate, Tae Bo, swimming and pool exercise classes — there's even a massage therapist and a dentist on staff!

Carlos Ibarra became interested in BFS when his son went to a soccer camp in Florida. Carlos immediately noticed that the American kids at the camp were much bigger, faster and stronger than his son. Although his son had good soccer skills, the boy lacked the physical means to be competitive with the American kids. That's when Carlos went into a bookstore









and saw a copy of the *Bigger Faster Stronger* book. He liked what he read, shared the ideas with Ricardo, and asked Claudia to look into flying someone out from BFS to hold a clinic.

### Getting Things Done

The first thing I noticed looking out from the plane as we neared Guatemala City was

how fabulously green the countryside is. It's a beautiful volcanic area, with still active volcanoes. Such a landscape is something that must be experienced firsthand to fully appreciate.

I had been cautioned that there are areas of this country that visitors should avoid, but of

course that can be said about any country. I've traveled to many Third World countries, and I've learned you always have to be careful about keeping an eye on your belongings, even when staying at the nicer hotels. That being said, my sponsors took fantastic care of me. I stayed at a pleasant little motel that used to be a house. It was very clean, had warm

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**Sporta owners Carlos Ibarra (white shirt) and Ricardo Rodriguez (blue shirt) and clinic participants are all smiles.**



water, amazing food, and even had American movies with Spanish subtitles. Everyone went out of their way to make me feel welcome.

### **Getting Down to Business**

One of the primary reasons I was flown in for this clinic is that the owners of Sporta wanted to create a facility, staffed with a team of elite coaches, to produce more-successful athletes. Carlos and Ricardo plan to build a completely new room, 20 feet by 50 feet, devoted to BFS training with BFS equipment. After getting established in Guatemala City, the owners plan to set up more upper-limit training facilities throughout the entire country.

Although I was brought in to do a two-day clinic, we decided the best way to accomplish our goals without interfering with the daily operation of the facility was to have shorter sessions and expand to three days. The next challenge was the language barrier – none of the participants spoke a word of English. They resolved this problem by hiring an interpreter. If you've never tried this, you've got to know it's quite a challenge for a presenter because you have someone talking at the same time you're talking. My hat goes off to my interpreter for being patient with me, and for keeping up with me when I was running around coaching during the hands-on session.

The main sport in Guatemala is soccer, not American football, and most of the kids at the clinic were about 12 years of age. Despite their youth, they worked really hard and were anxious to learn. Because of their age and lifting experience, we focused on technique, especially on the squat and the power clean. At BFS we want athletes to have long, healthy athletic careers, so we stress perfect technique from the very start. Of special importance was helping the athletes and the coaches set short- and long-term goals – I was especially moved to learn that one of their long-term goals was to have a BFS-trained athlete represent Guatemala in the 2012 Olympic Games.





Sporta General Manager  
Claudia de Smith



In the past (and this is part of the reason for their lack of success in competitive sports) the Guatemalans generally didn't use weight training in their athletic programs. BFS is about creating athletes, and this was tough for some of the coaches to understand, as they had been working more on a personal training course with older clients who were primarily interested in bodybuilding proto-

cols. But it didn't take long for everyone at the clinic to catch on to the idea that "bigger, faster, stronger" translates into winning.

I'd like to thank my hosts for the opportunity to visit their beautiful country and offer our clinic at their wonderful facility. The response to the clinic was amazing — there were parents who attended who were ready to sign up their

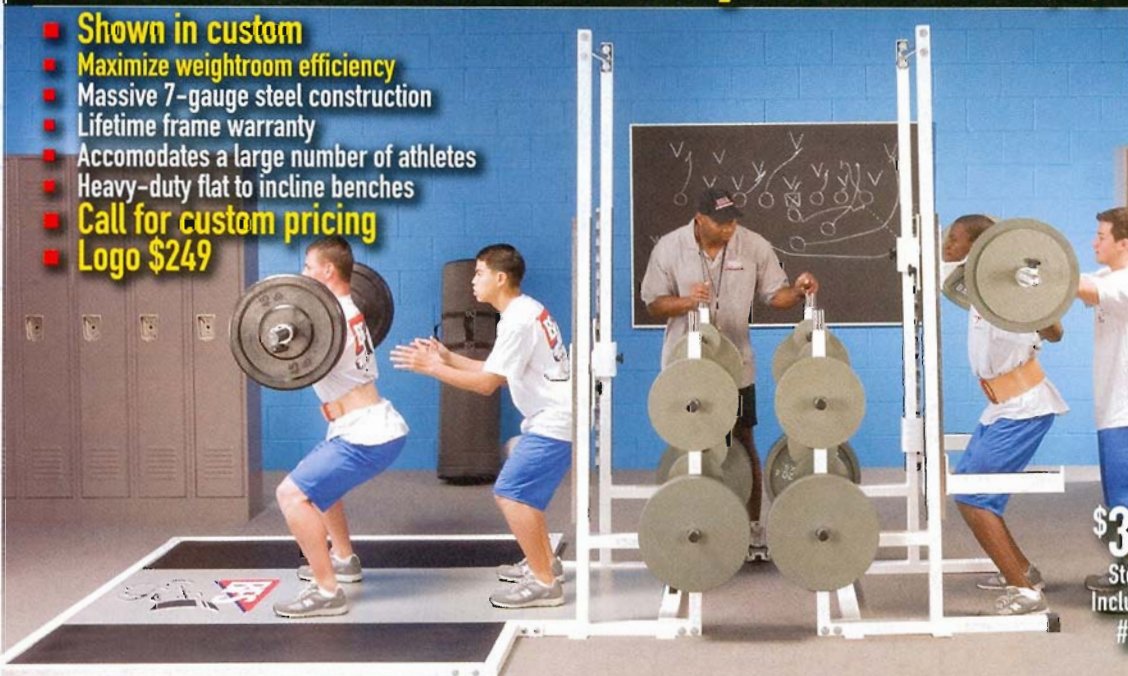
sons and daughters on the spot for the training that Carlos and Ricardo will offer soon.. Naturally, it will take some time for these up-and-coming Guatemalan athletes to make their presence felt in international circles, but they now have the means and the methods to accomplish their goals. I am grateful to have been a part of it, and am looking forward to visiting this wonderful country again. **BFS**

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