

community

MICHEAL SPURLOCK ON MISSION

by Rachel Turner

Breaking the Curse

Wide receiver Micheal Spurlock broke a Tampa Bay curse in 2007. Raymond James Stadium shook with excitement and shock as Micheal returned a kickoff for a touchdown against the Atlanta Falcons in a regular season game—the first in the Buccaneers' thirty-two-year history.

During the following three years, he also returned a punt and a squib kick for a touchdown, but none of those feats affected Micheal like leaving the United States for the first time on a mission trip with SCORE International in 2011.

"I wanted to get out of my comfort zone, see how other people live, and learn a new culture," said Micheal. "I wanted to open my eyes and heart to something new."

On Mission

Micheal heard about the mission trip to Costa Rica through Buc's chaplain Doug Gilcrease. Doug, who also works with Athletes in Action, approached SCORE International in 2009 to set up a construction mission trip for five NFL players.

"The trip actually had nothing to do with football," said Doug. "I just wanted to get the players away from their comfort zone, cell phones, and internet, so we went to Costa Rica to build a fence."

During that trip, the players were riding back to their hotel late one night when they saw young men practicing American football on soccer field.

"Stop the bus!" They yelled. Doug and the players walked to the soccer field, met the players, and learned that the soccer-crazed country had just begun a Costa Rican American Football Federation.

Since then, SCORE International has provided coaches, referees, and equipment to help the league grow, and every March, Doug hosts several NFL players to do football clinics.

'You Can't Break Them . . .'

Three years after the Costa Rican American Football Federation began, Micheal decided to visit Costa Rica with two teammates - Adam Hayward and Corey Lynch. Their mission included constructing missionary apartments, speaking at several schools, and running football clinics for the six Costa Rican teams.

The Tampa team hit the ground running as they mixed cement during the day and ran football clinics after nine o' clock every night, since that was the only time American football teams could use the soccer fields to train.

"These are a lot of guys that soccer is their first sport - their feet are their hands," said Micheal. "You're pretty much teaching football to grown men but on the level of little kids. But you can't break them no matter how hard you work them."

After each clinic, Micheal, Adam, or Corey would speak to the players about how a relationship with Christ changed their lives.

"Before, what made me successful were the things that I accomplished and material things," said Micheal. "Now, especially after coming here, it opens up your heart and eyes to understand that success isn't made through material things but through relationships - loving on people, praying with them, and sharing the Word with them."

For more information on how to get involved with SCORE International's NFL week, please contact the home office at 423.894.7111 or info@scoreinternational.org.

