



## TOUCHING HEARTS

Sports are all about big moments, the razorthin edge between success and failure, between smiles and heartache.

But for the Jaguars players and coaches who traveled more than 7,000 miles to the mountains of Peru this past summer, the distance between smiles and heartbreak never seemed so close — or so painfully distant.

The trip to deliver thousands of pairs of shoes to children in those mountain villages in far-away South America "changed the lives forever" of players like John Ashworth, coaches like Matt Crenshaw and Austin Parkinson, and the rest of the IUPUI crew that delivered on last winter's pledge by head coach Ron Hunter to provide a pair of sneakers for thousands of children in South America, in Africa and in other countries in need.

"I think we all sensed the trip would be something special," says Parkinson, who joined the IUPUI staff after the game that drew worldwide attention to Hunter's support for Samaritan's Feet, the organization dedicated to providing 10 million pairs of shoes for kids doing without.

The IUPUI contingent wanted to "bring those kids hope," Parkinson adds, and to "pray with them — and for them." What they didn't expect was how their own lives would be transformed.

"You see people, especially young kids, living in sand dunes and sleeping on dirt floors — and you have a chance to bring smiles to their faces, if only for a moment," says Crenshaw, a former IUPUI standout.

"If we Americans were put in that situation for just two days, we'd be frowning and mad and unhappy," he adds. "But they are smiling, ready for the best of life. How can you not be changed by that?"

Ashworth, a sophomore from Indianapolis, felt the impact of the poverty that surrounded the team on its trip.

"I have a new appreciation for how lucky I am to live in a nice house, have food to eat, have clothes and shoes, and to have an opportunity as a college student to make a better future for myself," he says.

"The trip changed how I will act in the future; I will make sure I do not take anything for granted, and I will teach my kids the importance of living in a country as great as the one we live in."

The players and coaches didn't expect the warmth and generosity of those who may forever face lives in poverty.

"There was this kid who'd gotten his shoes, and we were talking a bit," Crenshaw recalls. "He wanted to give me something, too, so he gave me the bracelet off his arm. Who knows how much that cost him, but that touched me. I wear it often."

"What I'm not sure any of us expected was the joy those kids gave to us," adds Parkinson. "They have so much less than we do, but their joy in living, in spending time with us and in their smiles is something that will stay with us forever."