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Gold medalists serve kids in Anaheim

BY CHRISTINE WON
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Members of the U.S. men's volleyball team showed they can serve more than a ball by dishing out plates of food to underprivileged children Thursday at the Anaheim White House restaurant.

The kids, loudly chanting "USA," were excited to meet the players who won gold in Beijing, incredulous that the players themselves would be serving the food.

"It's crazy," said Wendy Rivas, 13, of the Boys and Girls Club of Anaheim. "They're gold medalists; they should be the stars but they're serving us."

Indeed, six of the gold medalists, towering over the 30-some children, scooped out ladles of penne pasta and spaghetti in a buffet line for the children holding out their plates in one hand, mini American flags in the other.

Before the food service, the kids rushed up to them, high-fiving and touching their gold medals.

"I'm excited," said Perrie McSwain, 10. "I never ate with anybody famous before."

After the kids were seated with their food, U.S. team member Scott Touzinsky made his rounds, stopping by tables to talk with them.

And when kids got bossy with their second helpings, he even waited on them.

"I'm their slave tonight," Touzinsky said, with a smile on his face. "It's cool - serving the kids, we get to give back as so many have given to us."

The dinner was organized by owner



Olympians Kevin Hansen, David Lee, Scott Touzinsky, Rich Lambourne, Reid Priddy, and Anaheim White House restaurateur Bruno Serato emerge from the White House restaurant to the tune of cheering children from the Anaheim Boys and Girls Club on Aug. 28. > PHOTOS: JOSHUA SUDOCK/OCREGISTER.COM

Gold medal appetites

The six players' favorite dishes at the Anaheim White House:

Kevin Hansen - Filetto di Romeo and Juliette

Rich Lambourne - Escargot con Aglio e Erbe Dior

David Lee - Versace Sea Bass

Sean Rooney - Ravioli Gwen Stefani

Reid Priddy - Carpaccio di Manzo Madame Sisi

Scott Touzinsky - Romeo Gigli Salm-on Chocolat



Reid Priddy, a Huntington Beach native and Olympic gold medal-winning outside hitter for the U.S. men's volleyball team, chats with the kids.

Bruno Serato - who has sponsored the team since 2005 - to welcome the players home at the Italian restaurant, at 887 S. Anaheim Blvd.

Serato feeds underprivileged children every day as part of Caterina's Club, named after his mother; doling out 35,000 free meals a year.

"I was born very poor," Serato said. "I'll never forget where I came from."

On special occasions such as these, it makes the free meals feel even more special - to the kids, owner and team members.

"It's great to see the community of Orange County rallying around the team," said U.S. team member Kevin Hansen of Newport Beach. "People are watching and getting into volleyball. It's an honor to be role models for these kids."

For the last three years before the games, the players ate at the White House every day after training, their meals specially prepared by executive chef Eddie Meza.

The nutritional value is great: high protein, fiber, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals to boost their performance and stamina.

"I told these guys they won because of the food," Serato said.

"My first question when they came back was, 'Where's my gold medal?' I cried so much when they won. I've never cried so much over a sports game before."

The feeling is mutual. The players said they missed the White House food while away.

Half of the team actually got the stomach flu, said U.S. team member Reid Priddy of Huntington Beach. Priddy was most affected, out for two days dehydrated and without an appetite.

But stomach flu aside, he said the Olympic experience, camaraderie with the team and support from the community have been incredible.

Volunteers help finish ball field

PHOTOS BY ROD VEAL
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Volunteers from Swinerton Builders and Home Depot helped on Friday finish construction of the ball fields at Kraemer Park in Placentia.

The recently named Torii Hunter Field, in honor of a donation for the Angels' outfielder, is being built in conjunction with donations from the Anaheim Angels, Magical Builders and Snell & Wilmer Law Offices and in association with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Brea, Placentia and Yorba Linda.

Volunteers worked on a 300-foot wall, landscaping and completed other projects in preparation for the grand opening Sept. 12.



Mike Thelen and Richard Knowlton clean up excess concrete from bricks in a wall at the baseball field.



Raul Romero, left, and Caesar Yslas, both of Swinerton Builders Concrete Services, volunteer by paving the dugout with concrete.



Randy Worrel, a volunteer from Home Depot, moves a barrel of debris from the construction area. "What a blessing it is to do something for the kids," he said.