

Meet is special for Anguilla team

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Special to the Miami Herald

The Anguilla track and field team absolutely makes no sense, but everyone on the team seems to be enjoying that fact to the utmost.

The team, which is competing Friday through Sunday in the Northwest Express Track and Field Classic at Ansin Sports Complex in Miramar, hails from one of the tiniest islands in the Caribbean.

Anguilla is approximately 16 miles long and three miles wide, with a population of some 16,000. Yet, this miniscule island has brought one of the biggest contingents to the prestigious meet. The travel party from the island contains 10 coaches, 60 athletes (7 to 19 years of age), 10 chaperones and 30 parents as the team makes its first appearance in the meet.

First problem to conquer. It's not easy getting from Anguilla to Miramar. Like Anguilla itself, the airport on the island is small and certainly doesn't come close to handling a commercial jet. So, getting to Miramar meant taking a ferry from Anguilla to St. Maarten and then boarding a Jet Blue flight to South Florida.

Travel woes aside, what makes this team's journey even more interesting is the fact that Anguilla even fields a track and field team. You see, there is no track on the island for the kids to practice on.

"Just grass for them to run on, get ready and get in shape," coach Terry Williams said with a laugh. "We

spray paint lanes on the grass for the kids to practice. Makes them think it's like a real track. It will be unique for our kids to actually see and run on a real track."

That said, don't feel sorry for the Anguilla track and field team.

"We will stand tall and proud and represent our country well," said Williams, who was born in Miami and went to Miami Central High. "This is a special moment for these kids and our country."

How did Williams, a standout track and football athlete at Central, make his way from Miami to Anguilla, a British Overseas Territory? Credit his wife, Genna Webster Williams, who he met while attending Liberty University. She had lived in Anguilla while growing up and eventually took Terry there for a vacation. "Paradise," Terry said, which is what most people who visit the island also say. No need to continue on vacation. Terry and Genna had found their home.

Genna founded the Anguilla All-Stars track team and pretty much did not have to look far for a coach. That would be her husband.

First thing to come into Terry's mind was to somehow, some way find a way for the kids to compete in the Northwest Express Track Classic. He knew what the meet meant to kids since he competed in it for many years starting at age 6.

The Anguilla government and the community chipped in with money to make the dream a reality.