



THE ST BERNARD CHALLENGE – 800KM BIKE RIDE SAVING CHILDREN’S LIVES!

On 12th July twelve members of the “Triathlon Club of Andrésy” (TCA) will begin an enduring 5 day, 800km fundraising cycle ride from Andrésy to Aoste in Italy, via Paris, Bourgogne, the Jura mountains and the 2469 metre Col St Bernard climb in Switzerland. The victory lap is scheduled for 16th July in the “vélodrome” in Aigle.

Funds raised will go to Mécénat Chirurgie Cardiaque, a French-based charity enabling children with heart malformations to undergo surgery here in France when they lack the technical and financial means in their country of origin. Mécénat Charitable Events’ Manager, Marie-Sophie Cazès explains “Each year this association saves the lives of around 200 children from countries where they do not have the money or technical means to carry out this type of critical heart surgery.”

For Alain Beucherie, President of TCA, “This is not only a great sporting challenge for us, it’s an honour to participate in such an international event to support such a worthwhile charity”.

Over 350 volunteer host families support Mécénat by caring for children post operation (6 to 8 weeks) until they are fully recovered and ready to depart. Aleth who has cared for over 20 children, says “Nothing can match the joy we have when we see the children come out of the operation successfully and begin to live a healthy life”.

“This is an ambitious challenge involving many players but comprising one team focused on only one objective - saving lives.” Said Bob Bell, President of Yvelines Heraldic, initiator of the event. ■

Follow the challenge on www.lionsheraldic78.org

LESLIE CIKRA

Professional Volleyball Player

Leslie Cikra, a U.S. national team player, came to Istres, South France, to play professional volleyball.

Hi Leslie, so, was playing professional volleyball abroad always something you strived for?

Not at all. I didn’t even know I was going to play volleyball in college until my sophomore year in high school. I’m tall and I developed late. I was pursued by a few agents in my senior college year in Tennessee. After having talked about what I had in mind, I was able to pick from a few offers the one that I felt made the most sense as a first professional season abroad. I wanted to be able to play at the highest level I could, coming out of college. Istres (Ouest Provence) in the South of France came up, and I thought: It cannot get much better than that!

What were your first impressions this year?

I remember flying in over the ocean, seeing the coast of France, being overwhelmed with the beauty but also the immediate whirlwind experience of starting with medical tests and training

straight away. We had a long pre-season to get to know each other. We have 4-5 girls that also played college ball in the U.S. (U.S. American, Canadian, Norwegian, Bulgarian, Serbian), and the rest are French. Since my coach is Dutch, we speak 80 % English, but I liked to learn the French language.

There was a transition for me, from the U.S. all across the board. The practice and workouts’ pace is much slower. We play a completely different style of volleyball here than I was used to. I had to adjust and learn a whole new side of the game. France also has one of the longest pro seasons in the world, so the time horizon is quite different.

How did you spend the hours off the court in Istres?

I’m an aspiring foodie, so I have really enjoyed eating local and fresh food here in France. I started off going to the big supermarket, but now I don’t miss our Tuesday morning market in the city. It’s the most inexpensive way to shop, and it’s also allowed me to dive into the culture and get to know the way of living. ■

