

## Our YA, Osaro Otobo, and the U16 England Girls Basketball team

On May 21<sup>st</sup> I travelled with the U16 England Girls Basketball team to Toulouse in France for an international tournament. I managed to get into the England squad when I was 13 years old. The U16 England coach, Karen Burton, spotted me in the U14 National Inter Regional Tournament at Lilleshall National Sports Centre in Shropshire. This was in 2008 when I was playing for London– we had won the tournament for the second year in a row. She then picked me along with 3 other girls (two of those were my fellow London team mates) to train with the U16 squad. Since I was 3 years younger than most of the girls in the squad I didn't expect to make the final squad for the European Championships but I worked hard enough to make it. Ever since then I've been in the squad and I've been attending training camps during holidays (e.g. half term) and weekends.



To prepare for the tournament in Toulouse I've been attending training camps since October last year. The tournament was the first opportunity to have friendly games against other teams to prepare us for the main competition that we are working towards: the FIBA Europe U16 European Championships in the summer. The Championships will be held in Macedonia this year.

It was a really exciting experience going to France to play in the same tournament for the second time (I went the year before with the U16 England squad). The weather was beautiful – it was a welcomed break from the typical British weather! Even though it was a basketball event I could see people acting out the *Olympic Values*. Every team showed *courage* especially the younger England team (the U15 England development squad) that came along with us for the younger tournament – it

was all their first time playing for England and so it took a lot of courage to

play. Every team showed *determination*; all of the matches were tough, everyone wanted to win! Our coaches showed us *inspiration* by encouraging us to do well. *Equality* was displayed; everyone was treated the same whether they were French, English, Spanish etc. *Respect* was shown before and after the games; we would always shake the oppositions' hands and cheer their names after the games. We would also shake the referees and the table officials' hands as well.



*Excellence* was shown by the level we played at in every game and in the teams that won each tournament. *Friendship* could be seen everywhere! I've made so many nice French friends; I talk to them all the time on Facebook. Some of us even tried to learn some French for the matches e.g. we learn how to say 'foul' and 'come on the reds'. It was a lovely experience and I hope I can go again next year.

If you want to play at a high level in your chosen sport you need to work incredibly hard! You need to want to be the best no matter how old you are. You need to be prepared to dedicate most of your time to training and making yourself better.



1<sup>st</sup> June 2010