



The Jr. National USA Karate Team 2008

Travel Sports

Sports Illustrated Teen

Fall 2014

Stay Humble.

The story of a girl, her team, and perseverance.

She started playing because it was “kind of a family thing.” Eleni did not know when she was four years old that softball would be her ticket around the country. All she knew was that her sisters played, so she played. It was fun, and she was happy to find that she was actually pretty good. In fact, she was so good that she came to a point where playing in-house was just too easy. She was ready for a new challenge.

She made the switch to travel, but after a couple of years, she felt like something was missing. Sure, she was

competing against tougher teams, but it wasn’t all she had hoped and dreamed for.

She realized that, while she had a few friends on the team, it wasn’t



Starting Short Stop: Eleni Kioussis

So Much to Learn:

Studies have show that teens who travel have better grades and are more likely to go to college. This is especially true for teens who have been on “learning focused” trips.

Travel sports require teens to support a team, solve problems, and communicate with people from different places. That sounds pretty learning focused to us!



Fundraising

Sometimes the cost of playing travel sports can be especially high, but effective fundraising can make travel sports an affordable option for all athletes. The thing with fundraising is that people often don't know where to begin. Here are some tips for successful fundraising:

1.

Start early! Set your fundraising goals and make a plan at the ends of each season for the next year.

2.

Be Creative! If everyone in your neighborhood sells popcorn and cookie dough, do something else. Host a party, auction, or raffle instead.

3.

Use Social Media! Whether you are allowing for online donations or using promoting events, Social Media is a great way to increase your

4.

Be a Team! Fundraising together helps keep up motivation and increases creativity. Work with your teammates to reach your goals.

the close-knit environment she was used to playing in. With her dad as head coach, Eleni founded a new team, Frankfort Fusion. At tryouts, players were assessed on both their skills and their attitude.

When Nationals rolled around that year, her team of thirteen year olds had qualified for the top class 14 year old division.

Everything seemed to be going well until the team lost in bracket play. Eleni remarked that no one let losing bring them down. They all knew they could still place if they played their way through the loser's bracket.

Four games were standing in between them and a top-8 title. If they lost, the season would be over.

With perseverance and resilience, Frankfort Fusion began playing the next day. They won the first game by slaughter or mercy rule, and the next one and the next one. It was now their fourth game in a row, playing a team from back home who everyone said was better than them all season. Guess what? They beat them by slaughter rule too.

Ultimately, Frankfort Fusion placed 7th out of 80 teams. Eleni finally found the team and the competition she was hoping for. She says, "No matter where you play or who you're playing, you can't judge your competition based on reputation. You have to stay humble about you and your opponents."



Frankfort Fusion
7th out of 80 teams
14U USSA Nationals
Hamilton County, IN
2011