

Aussies got game, as locals find out

South Pointe tourney features real globetrotters

By **Rebecca Sulock**
The Herald

The teenage Aussies claim they really do say "G'day mate."

Several Australian teams were in Rock Hill on Wednesday to play in a holiday basketball tournament at South Pointe High School.

The Dingoes, along with the Bandicoots, The Wombats and the Echidnas (that's a furry Australian animal with razor-sharp spikes) brought their game to York County, playing against the Bearcats, the Trojans, the Cougars and other local high school teams. The Australians hooked up with South Pointe's Dwayne Hartsoe online and arranged to come play in the tourney.

It took a 28-hour-flight to get to the States, and the Australians were glad to be here.

Why?

"Real iced tea," said Matt Martin, 18, shooting guard for the team that began the afternoon as the Kookaburras and then changed its name to the Kangaroos.

"Shoes," said Clint Steindl, 16. "Our shoes cost too much."

"The bands, the cheerleaders, the things we see in the movies, but we don't have," said Matt's mom, Margaret Martin. "All the pomp and pageantry, it's great."

For the basketball players, the trip is like the American high school band cruise to the Bahamas. Parents pay, schools help, kids raise money selling raffle tickets.

"Australians love to travel," said Chris McCoy, the tour's organizer.

Tour includes Carolinas, West Coast

The Australians will play in tournaments in North and South Carolina and on the West Coast as part of their nearly three-week experience.

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Aussies from 1B

They'll tour Duke University's campus and see the University of North Carolina basketball team play Davidson College. They'll hit the outlet stores at Concord Mills in Concord, N.C.

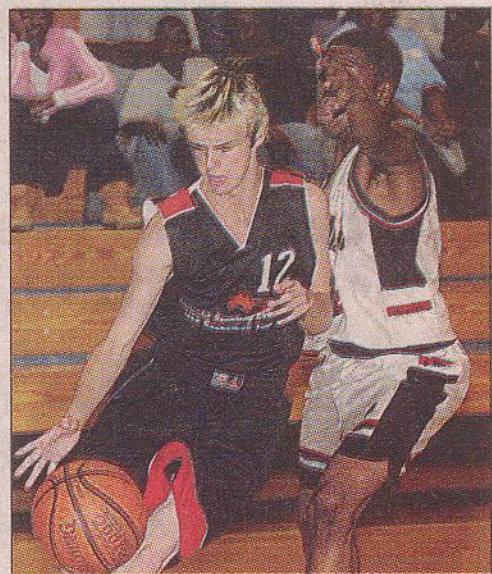
The boys on the Kangaroos gave a quick lesson in Aussie slang: "She'll be right" means "It's all good." "Cheers" is "thanks." Beers are "coldies." "That's sick!" is a good thing.

It's summer Down Under, so the Australians were adjusting to the chilly rain that fell outside the gym at South Pointe on Wednesday afternoon. When they left Sydney, where many of the players are from, it was about 100 degrees. Also in Sydney, the 18-year-olds on the Kangaroo team were of legal drinking age.

But no worries. The big American gymnasiums, the chance to play in some great basketball games and the girls the teenagers hope to meet will make up for the soggy weather.

"This is the ultimate, really," McCoy said.

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Australian Aaron Doherty, left, drives against Rock Hill's Geri Jones at Saluda Trail Middle School on Wednesday. The Horizons Sporting Events Dingoes team played against the Rock Hill High School ninth-grade team in the game.