

Friday, January 13th:

The Mission Squash team left Hogg Middle School around 1:30 on Friday afternoon to head to the airport. For several of the girls, it was going to be their first time on a plane so there were lots of emotions ranging from nervous to excited! We got dinner and snacks at the airport and departed from Houston just after 5:00pm. The flight went smoothly, and once we were in the air all of the girls were comfortable and intrigued by getting to see the world from above. The team arrived in Philadelphia and got our coats ready. When we got outside, it was windy and COLD! We



loaded up the van as fast as we could and climbed inside, ready to get to the hotel. The team stayed at the Racquet Club of Philadelphia. The Racquet Club was built in 1907 and is a history rich building home to many racquet

sports. We settled in our rooms and headed to bed to prepare for the day ahead of us.



UTN '17

Mission Squash takes on Philadelphia

Saturday, January 14th:

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is a city home to many historical and iconic landmarks. It was important to the Mission Squash team that while we were there, we would do our best to see as many of the monuments as possible. This meant starting first thing Saturday morning to go

see the Liberty Bell! At the Liberty Bell museum, the Team learned about the history of the Liberty Bell and its representation of liberty and the road to freedom for all people. Afterwards, we went across the street to Independence Hall. This is where both The Declaration of Independence and The Constitution were adopted. Soon, it was time to head To SquashSmarts. SquashSmarts is the urban squash program in Philadelphia that generously hosted the UTN tournament. We arrived early to watch the opening ceremony. During this presentation, the players reviewed rules and expectations of the tournament and got to hear a short testimony of an urban squash alumna. Tempest Bowden is a graduate of the SquashSmarts program and has now returned to be a coach. In 2016, she was named the Up2Us Youth Coach of the Year. She shared her story with the crowd, and inspired them to give their all, work their hardest, and always get back up if you get knocked down. After watching the opening ceremony and grabbing lunch, it was time to get down to business. The girls' first match was played against StreetSquash Harlem. The girls put up a good fight, but StreetSquash took the lead and won 4-1. Dinner was provided at the venue, so the team ate there then headed back to the racquet club. Before the girls jumped back on court at the hotel, we took a quick tour to see all the sports offered at the club- the scholars even got the opportunity to jump on the Real Tennis court and play a quick game!



Sunday, January 15th:

Sunday morning, the team was scheduled to play their second match against SquashSmarts. Several of the girls' matches turned into five game thrillers and they took the win 3-2! After this match, the team loaded up in the van to head to UPenn. At UPenn, we got to meet Chris Hanson and Gilly Lane - two pro players who both have played for Team USA! We



looked around the University of Pennsylvania's squash facility and watched Chris and Gilly battle it out on court. We hustled back to SquashSmarts in time for Mission Squash's third match. When we got back, Coach Santiago introduced the team to Tim Wyant, Santiago's

first coach and the executive director of NUSEA. Then, it was time for the girls to get on court one last time! Playing against SquashBusters from Boston, Mission Squash secured another win, conquering SquashBusters in 3 out of 5 matches played. The team ended the night by going to Little Italy to have a celebratory dinner.



Monday, January 16th:

Monday was the team's last day in Philadelphia and we wanted to make the most of it. We went to SquashSmarts one last time to watch CitySquash and SquashHaven face one another in the finals. After SquashHaven became victorious, beating CitySquash's A Team 5-0, we left and ventured off to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. There, we made our last stop at the iconic Rocky Steps. Once we recreated the

scene, we were off to grab lunch then catch a flight back to Houston. UTN '17 was a great success and we hope the girls enjoyed it as much as the staff did!

