

NRDC-ITA AND SOLBIATE OLONA BASKET SCHOOL

Together in the Name of Sport

■ by MAJ (ITA A) Giovanni Boggeri

The co-operation with the civilian environment surrounding Ugo Mara Barracks is one of the goals that HQ NRDC-ITA has constantly achieved since its foundation. HQ NRDC-ITA personnel have integrated very well into the Olona Valley area and on many occasions the local authorities have witnessed a positive relationship between the local population and the NATO multinational community.

At the same time a capstone of the daily life within our HQ is represented by sporting activities, not only as part of the individual training requirements which allow us to be ready to deploy, but also as a set of positive values that are ideally connected with the military way of life; robust daily training, personal involvement, mutual support, the fight for victory and respecting the adversary.

A good example of the military and civilian integration in the name of sport is represented by the link between HQ NRDC-ITA and Solbiate Olona Basket School, which is the name of the basketball team in the village where NRDC-ITA HQ is located. In the past HQ NRDC-ITA personnel have played as part of the team and some still play with them to this day. Furthermore individuals from NRDC-ITA are always present giving support during each domestic game, which take place at the Gymnasium of the Solbiate Olona Secondary School.

Basketball is a sort of institution in the entire Lombardia region and in particular in the Varese province, with the Varese team is regarded as one of the most famous and successful basketball teams not only in Italy but also throughout Europe. Behind this there can be seen are a vast quantity of clubs at a lower level which is displayed in the almost each village, town or city in the province having a basketball team.

Solbiate Olona Basket School was founded in 1999 by a group of friends 'addicted' to basketball who started playing in the Varese Province 2nd Division championship. In 2001 the team achieved promoted to the 1st Division, where it successfully remains to this day.

The relationship between HQ NRDC-ITA and Basket School began in 2003 when two members of the NATO force here, an Italian Captain and a Greek Sergeant, joined the team as players. With



them the team finished runner-up in both the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 championships, missing out on the title by just a few points.

The 2008-2009 championship has recently finished and the Basket School finished in third place with a member of the HQ part of the team helping to achieve this fine result.

Another illustration of the partnership between HQ NRDC-ITA and Basket School are the tournaments, which are organised by the team at Solbiate Olona. These tournaments often see members of our HQ involved not only as players or spectators but also directly engaged in organising and supporting these events. A couple of examples of this are the event of the '1000 points game' organised in 2008 to collect money for a humanitarian organization helping the children of Congo, and also during the annual '3 v 3' Solbiate Olona tournament in June this year.

The coach of the team, Mr. Luca Besani, emphasised the importance of the link between his team and our HQ by saying, "Solbiate is a small village and it is not so easy to find basketball players who want to sacrifice their time at the end of the working day playing for free in a not-professional team. It is this reason why it is essential for us to receive players from HQ NRDC-ITA whose technical and physical preparation is not only appreciated but also their strong motivation, which can be seen as an example to all of us. Unfortunately on occasion we are forced to lose them when they have to deploy for an operation abroad and the team can be a little bit worried when they are involved in this kind of activity, but when they are back and ready to play, our spirit and our friendship become stronger. We hope that this relationship will be strengthened year after year and that HQ NRDC-ITA continues to be manned with good basketball players available to be part of our team."

In reality we all know that everyone in the Basket School team has a dream - To be joined by a fantastic American player arriving from HQ NRDC-ITA..

Who knows if this 'NBA' dream could be realised... ■