

observe Ramadan - which in most predominantly Muslim countries would be fine, as you are not asked to undertake the sacrament if it poses a risk to your health - but regardless, Balbay is appreciative of what the ceremony stands for.

"One of the purposes for that is trying to see what it is like for poor people who don't have enough food to eat every day," said Balbay. "That's why we have Ramadan. You can see why they're struggling. It's kind of cool to know that so you can help them more."

What Balbay has struggled with, however, is injury.

At the start of the 2007-08 season Barnes had him slated as the team's back-up point guard, saying: "A year ago, D.J. (Augustin) logged way too many minutes early. As much as we did try to rest our team as a whole, I think D.J. was a little tired at the end of the season. Dogus is a guy who will be counted on heavily."

But as the season approached, Balbay's right knee began bothering him. He'd had some minor knee problems a few years earlier, but nothing that kept him off the court. On Oct. 4, it finally caught up with him.

One of the main problems was muscle fatigue. Balbay played for the Turkish Under-19 National Team in the summer and was on a brutal schedule, playing 20 games in a month. After his return to the United States, he was playing with his Texas teammates when his knee finally had enough.

"I was just running on the court as we were playing pick-up and my knee just gave out. I didn't even understand," said Balbay.

At the time the injury didn't seem terrible, but an MRI revealed that surgery would be required and Balbay was forced to sit out his inaugural season at Texas.

"It was kind of disappointing at first, but I realized I could get an advantage from sitting on the sideline," said Balbay. "I really got experience just watching the game, just watching the practice and films. I wasn't far away from the team. So I think it was a good year for me, even though I sat on the sidelines."

He also made note of how every player moves within the Texas offense. Balbay told *IT* that he made it a point to study each one of his teammates and not just Augustin, so that when he finally steps out on the court for the 2008-09 season, he'll know where every player is at all times.

He's fully healed now and will spend part of this summer back in Turkey, playing for the Under-20 National Team. It will be a welcome opportunity to see his family and spend some time in his home country. Balbay loves any opportunity he gets to see Istanbul.

"Everybody should see Istanbul because it's pretty cool," said Balbay. "When you talk about Turkey, people don't know about Turkey or Istanbul, but if you search on Google or you see Istanbul, you'll love it."

It's a big city, for sure. With a population of over 11 million, it's the fourth largest city in the world and the 19th largest urban area. Istanbul is also one of the world's oldest cities. It was founded in 667 BC as Byzantium. In 330 AD it was renamed Nova Roma ("New Rome") by Roman Emperor Constantine I, but the city became more widely known as Constantinople ("City of Constantine"). However, as far back as the 10th Century, the local Turkish people were calling it "Istanbul", which derives from the ancient Greek phrase "istambolin," meaning "in the city" or "downtown." Eventually, the name Constantinople was only used internationally and in 1930 Turkey officially renamed the city Istanbul - and as *They Might Be Giants* suggested, "people just liked it better that way."

Balbay describes it as "a mixture of Chicago and New York"



Dogus Balbay watched D.J. Augustin work magic last year. Now it's his turn.

Will Gallagher/Inside Texas

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because Istanbul is a cultural center for both Europe and Asia. The city sits on either side of the Bosphorous Strait, making it the only metropolis in the world that resides in two continents.

"I grew up on the Asia side," said Balbay. "The Europe side has more business places and is more crowded. The Asian side has more families and parks. I think the Asian side is more beautiful."

There are bridges that connect each side, including the mile-long Bosphorous Bridge. The sea is a big part of life in the city and some of Balbay's fondest memories from Istanbul are sitting at coffee shops on Bagdat Avenue and talking with his friends as they watched the ships go by on the Sea of Marmara.

"I'll just sit there and hang out with my friends. Turkish tea and coffee is real famous. I'll just sit there with a tea or coffee and just watch the sea," said Balbay, reminiscing.

He'll have a chance to see his home this summer and see his parents, who will be excited to see him because, as Balbay put it, they are quite "bored" now that his sister is married and he's off to college.

He will return, though. After a summer at home with the national team, he'll be back and ready to take on the challenge of playing point guard for the Texas Longhorns.

Not bad for a soccer player from Turkey. ■