FOOTBALL: PITCHING FOR PEACE

HALEY CARTER
Common Goal member talks about her experience with the Afghanistan Women’s National Team and the ability of football to inspire peace

FOOTBALL V HOMOPHOBIA
MAKING THE SPORT WELCOME TO ALL

FOOTBALL AND FORCED MIGRATION
RESTORING HUMAN RIGHTS IN LATIN AMERICA

A POST-MATCH PLEA FOR PEACE
DIDIER DROGBA TALKS PEACEBUILDING

GOL & PAZ
THE SECOND HALF OF BOJAYÁ
A photographic journey to a healing Colombia

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FOOTBALL: PITCHING FOR PEACE

Every year on 6th April, we celebrate the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace. Such a celebration can take many shapes: from events, to statements, to campaigns, to social media posts… all honouring the contribution of sport for development and peace.

We wanted to take this opportunity to talk about peace. And, of course, we wanted to look at the many dimensions of the football-peace binomial: football as a tool to promote tolerance, football’s contribution to peacebuilding processes, the creation of safe spaces to play or the power of football to create understanding between people or to inspire them to forgive one another, to confront their challenges, to overcome their past and to rebuild their societies. These are just a few examples.

While the contents published in this magazine also take many shapes and formats, the ‘back end’ of our articles is always the same: the human dimension. And that is why, while exploring the many layers of the football-peace binomial, and transforming them into stories, our team always looks into how football is changing human lives: the one of Leonel, the one of Mohammad, the one Anelani… but also the ones of Petra, Haley, Verónica, Carlos, Alonso, Luis Manuel, Didier… And the lives of many others not mentioned in this magazine, whose names remain anonymous, but who are the reason why we do what we do.

Elvira González-Vallés
FOOTBALL IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE
IN LATIN AMERICA, THREE FOOTBALL FOR GOOD ORGANISATIONS JOIN FORCES TO TACKLE ONE OF THE BIGGEST HUMANITARIAN CRISIS OF TODAY AND PROVIDE A SAFE SPACE FOR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY FORCED MIGRATION.

“FOR ME, FOOTBALL IS LIFE”
THE FOUNDING STORY OF FOOTBALL FOR GOOD ORGANISATION SPIRIT OF SOCCER.

FROM OPPONENTS TO TEAMMATES
THE PERES CENTER FOR PEACE & INNOVATION IS BRINGING PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS ONTO THE PITCH TO PLAY ON ONE TEAM – FOR PEACE.

MAKING THE SPORT WELCOME TO ALL
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HALEY CARTER
COMMON GOAL MEMBER TALKS ABOUT HER EXPERIENCE WITH THE AFGHANISTAN WOMEN’S NATIONAL TEAM AND THE ABILITY OF FOOTBALL TO INSPIRE PEACE
Forced migration is one of the phenomena most significantly shaping our world today. The political situation of many countries in South and Central America, alongside other factors such as globalisation, organised crime and climate change, are behind one of the most severe humanitarian crises of our time.
Countless communities of people are experiencing vulnerability, poverty, inequality, and socio-economic instability, which has generated unprecedented negative social effects in the region. Millions of inhabitants of Latin American countries have fled their homes in human migration caravans, in search of survival, and better futures for their families and communities.

Forced displacement, due to violence in the region, is one of the strongest factors contributing to family mobility. Among these families are children and adolescents, setting off on the journey with their parents or other family members; others without any type of adult support. People leave their homes in conditions of great economic and emotional difficulty and, in most cases, with an abject lack of information and knowledge about the country where they will seek refuge, the conditions of reception, and the likelihood of deportation.

In Central America, the migration of citizens from El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala to the north of the continent, is not only entwined with the American dream, but also simply with the search for respite from intense social and political persecution. In South America, migration from Venezuela represents one of the biggest challenges for the neighbouring countries. Since 2015, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Brazil have all reported increasing numbers of immigrants from Venezuela.

Most affected by these migration patterns are the young people and children of the continent. For them, the migratory experience is particularly traumatic, heartbreaking and incomprehensible. First, by the uprooting from their contexts of primary socialisation and their country of origin. Secondly, because of the barriers they face to integrate in the country of arrival, both in school and community environments. But, above all, because of the risks they confront during their journey - kidnappings, extortion, sexual assault or slavery by different armed groups. For example, in Mexico, the routes are controlled by organised criminal groups and drug cartels, or by the bodies of security that are allied to the local and international mafias.

Their exodus and diaspora throughout the American continent, in pursuit of survival, poses a threat to stability and progress in the region for all of its people. Such challenges require innovative solutions that can provide a response to such humanitarian emergencies and change perceptions of the problem that categorise migrants and refugees as a dehumanised mass. Instead, enabling the acknowledgement of individual human plights.

Every day there are thousands of people and their families who face this condition of human mobility and emergency, without hope and without seeing a solution in the near future. Faced with this situation, some very important actions are being developed based on the solidarity of the people, many with a welfare approach, which actually helps, but does not solve. I think it is time to think about more innovative and creative processes that impact these people in a social and integral way, equipping them with personal development tools that help them face their realities, creating hope in them, creating motivation that they need to get out of this crisis, “says Carlos Pérez, executive director of football for good organisation Fútbol con Corazón, that carries out programmes in Colombia and Panama.

“In Latin America and around the world, the football and the field are transformative and integrating elements, through which action can be taken to alleviate the emergency situation, provide hope and generate spaces where the right can be returned to recreate, to dream, to play.”

Football con Corazón is one of the three organisations implementing “Football in Emergency Response”, a regional project to provide relief, through football, for people in Latin America affected by forced migration. The project is implemented in cooperation with Seprojoven (Costa Rica) and Fudela (Ecuador). While the three organisations have extensive experience implementing football for good programmes to support young migrants and refugee communities, this is the first time they are joining forces to provide humanitarian aid that goes beyond their own communities, countries and borders. And, of course, they are using football to do so.

“Football plays a vital role in the lives of people who go beyond borders, countries and institutions. In Latin America and around the world, the football and the field are transformative and integrating elements, through which action can be taken to alleviate the emergency situation, provide hope and generate spaces where the right to recreate, to dream, to play can be restored.

It is a great opportunity to demonstrate the power of football in the construction of resilience, reinforcement of solidarity and a tool for inclusion,” says Verónica Escobar from Fudela.

“Football in Emergency Response uses the pedagogical force of football to support people affected by forced migration in Latin America and provide a safe space where fundamental human rights, such as play, recreation and integrity, can be restored. It builds on something as human and basic as the right to play, which plays a vital role in post-traumatic stress management, psychosocial wellbeing. In addition, football provides an opportunity for people affected by forced migration to connect and build a community as well as engaging with and integrating new communities.”

“The process of helping migrants or refugees is to accompany them in their displacement and not to separate them from the community they are in or leave a receiving or expelling country. The mission of the project is to strengthen these accompaniment processes for migrants and refugees through activities such as psychosocial wellbeing workshops, recreational games or the football3 methodology, amongst others. That allows us to provide both group and individual support, inform about legal rights and provide a space for leisure and recreational activities. The project is currently supporting migrants who are at the different border points of Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia and Ecuador,” explains Alonso Chaves Vargas, director of Seprojoven.

Based on joint concepts and a set of mutually-agreed objectives, the organisations will adapt their expertise to each territory, culture and specific need. Another important aspect for the success of the project, as seen by the
Me tomo el atrevimiento de escribirte, de hablarte. Quizás sin tener el derecho de hacerlo, porque es muy difícil decir “te entiendo”, porque nadie puede entender lo que significa, escuchar el sonido de la puerta cerrar y salir a ningún lugar, buscar algo que no sabes que es.

Con la fe y la esperanza que durante tu trayecto, el camino sea amable, esperar que sea sin obstáculos es difícil, pero imaginándote que por lo menos no te encuentres con espinas. La dignidad y los “chamos”, seguramente serán lo que te impulsó a tomar esta decisión, a dar el primer paso, sin conocer cuando estaba el último. En esos, muchos espejos, me encuentro contigo en la calle con la cara abatida, buscando la fe que me catapultó al éxito. Con una mirada determinada a “echarle pichón”. Con miedo, porque el miedo hace parte natural de cualquier situación y, una vez que sabes que en ellas no habrá obstáculos es difícil, pero imaginándote que por lo menos no te encuentres con espinas. La dignidad y el “echarle pichón” es lo que me ha permitido ser padre y protector de dos niñas, te confieso a ti: Que mis ídolos ya no son esos que menciono, mi ídolo eres tú, que dejando todo atrás, has salido a buscar una mejor vida para ti y tus hijos, la que sin saberlo, llevaste tatuada en tu alma la bandera de Venezuela, y que en cada paso que das, la haces más grande, más valiente y honorable.

Los escenarios deportivos siempre han sido lugares para matar los fantasmas que nos han perseguido en distintas disciplinas, para nadie es un secreto que dentro de mi profesión siempre fuimos “dubiles”. Poco a poco y con mucho trabajo hemos ido quebrando cosas que parecían inquebrantables. Tus escenarios no son deportivos, tus lugares por el contrario han sido en muchos casos solidarios, fríos, húmedos y silenciosos, pero ahí, me has hecho sentir orgulloso de ser venezolano, el mundo entero ha sido testigo de tu gallardía. Querido caminante, te doy mi palabra que te defenderé y te haré saber al mundo con quién eres tú.

I take the liberty of writing to you, of talking to you. Though, perhaps, I don’t really have the right to do so, because it is very difficult to say “I understand you”, because nobody can comprehend what it really means to hear the sound of the door close behind you and leave for another place, to look for something without knowing what that something is.

Traveling with the hope and the faith that the road ahead is friendly, even though thinking there to be no obstacles is difficult, you pray, perhaps, that there will, at least, not be any thorns in your path. The dignity and the call of “chamos” is surely what prompted you to make the decision, to take the first step, without knowing when you will take the last.

I see you in many corners, I am with you in the street when you’re exhausted and downhearted, but in almost every case with a spirit stronger than steel! With a determined look to give it everything, and with fear because fear is a natural part of the situation, you and millions more are living through. But you won’t let that fear break you or paralyze you. In those places where I meet you, I stop, I give you words of encouragement, but you don’t believe that they are completely sincere. But these words are for you to make sure you know that they are sincere, that they are for you. Today, I’m using my voice and my words to defend you from ignorance and prejudice. When I was a child, I had many heroes and, after much sacrifice, they became my friends. I still remember the first time I spoke with Juan Arango, doubts in an idol for many young people in my country, and meeting José Manuel Rey, the lefty who was probably even more greatly revered, as well as some I won’t mention here because the list is long. People who have put the name of our country on high; each one of them fought adversity. At that time I was just 16 years old. Today after many years, after having moved around for more than half of my career and as I’m on my way out, after understanding what it is to be a father and protector of two girls, I confess this to you: my heroes are no longer the ones I mentioned, my heroes are you! You have been forced to leave everything behind and look for a better life for yourself and your children. You, who are unaware that you have the Venezuelan flag tattooed onto your soul, with every step you take, you honor this flag, making it bigger and braver.

Sports spaces have always been places to lay the ghosts that have been persecuting us to rest. For, it is no secret that within my profession we were always "weak". Little by little, and with much effort, we have been breaking things that seemed unbreakable. Your field is not a football pitch, the places you find yourselves in are, on the contrary, in many cases solitary, cold, wet and silent, but there, you have made me feel proud of being Venezuelan, and the whole world has borne witness to your dignity. Dear travelers, I give you my word that I will defend you and let the world know that the hero is YOU.
A mutilated plaster statue of Christ that was found under the rubble of a church where 119 people died has become the iconic image of the massacre of Bojayá that occurred on 2nd May 2002. The picture of this figure travelled the world; a disturbing image that reminds us that not even under God’s auspices are we safe.

That morning, 12-year-old Leonel Bedoya, whose trusted role as ‘Father Rogelio Antun’s right-hand man’ included the organisation of football matches, took refuge in the church, escaping from the fighting that was taking place outside. And there he was, singing songs to the youngest children in the church to calm them down, when the FARC Guerrilla group fired a cylinder bomb against the paramilitary groups.

At the time, the Colombian Pacific region had become a war zone. Illegal armed groups sought to seize land and maritime routes to establish territories for planting and transporting cocaine. The armed conflict left nearly 100 victims in that area alone, 30% of which were civilians. According to the ‘Centro de Memoria Histórica’, 550,000 had to leave their lands. Leonel was not one of the 40 children that died that day. His legs did not get burned like his 9-year-old cousin Leison. Nor did he die from asphyxiation like 10-year-old Asdrual. He was not crushed to death when the roof collapsed as Diana and Carmelino were, 3 and 7 years old respectively.

He woke up in a hospital three days later, confused, sad, terrified. And he soon understood that he would not see any member of his family, nor his friends ever again.

As photographers, videographers, journalists, anthropologists, sociologists and others travelled to capture what had happened in Bojayá, upon arrival none of them could remove their lens cap. The reason why, also lay in the rubble of the church, in the image of a mutilated Christ.

Only a few metres from the church stood a football field. The field that Leonel would miss so much, far from his land, because like another 740, he had to leave everything and walk away from his home.

Across that football field, they carried the bodies while the Red Cross arrived. There, they wrapped the children in shrouds, who only days before played with songs to the youngest children in the church to calm them down, when the FARC Guerrilla group fired a cylinder bomb against the paramilitary groups.

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Across that football field, they carried the bodies while the Red Cross arrived. There, they wrapped the children in shrouds, who only days before played with fear but were resigned to their fate. Somewhere on that field, the dreams of Leonel Bedoya remain buried. The dreams of a young boy, who someday, while training on that patch of land on the banks of the Atrato River, had dreamed of becoming a professional footballer.

Second Half

It is 9am on 17th November 2018. 16 years have passed since the Massacre of Bojayá. The municipality of Bella Vista, within the district of Chocó, where Bojayá is being rebuilt, is welcoming some VIP guests. There are 300 boys and girls living in the towns dotted along the banks of Atrato River, who have been invited to play football at the festival of “Gol & Paz”, a project that uses football as a tool for peacebuilding and reconciliation in Colombia. The project is supported by the German Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and organised by the Fútbol y Paz network.

In different boats arrive dozens of children who would normally only leave their villages in case of medical emergency. But this time, there is no pain, only the nervousness of a child who knows that he is going to play in a football tournament.

In a kind of catharsis, Leonel tries to fulfill the dreams of others and tries to explain to the young players that in the games of this festival, the winner won’t be the one who scores more goals, but the one who behaves better on the pitch. He tells them, with the characteristic patience of a pedagogue, that they will play without a referee and that they will have to learn to solve their differences themselves. He also states that each team will have to include female players, in order to promote gender equality on and off the pitch.

Leonel is here because this is where he wants to be. Because he believes that football can help children and youth to become better people, and not repeat the horror that he witnessed as a child.

His beliefs are ones constructed over the course of more than 10 years, through training children three times a week without making a penny, without jerseys or refreshments for the kids; and without a football field, and only a piece of land that floods when it rains and becomes a storm of dust when it is sunny.

Within the framework of the Gol & Paz project, Leonel travelled to Medellín where he took part in football for good training-of-trainer courses and learnt additional methodologies to continue empowering his pupils. In this context, he met a further 100 peace leaders who, like him, want to return to their lands and transform their country with a football.

The festival takes place in the humid heat of Bojayá. Slowly, children are embracing the rules of the game: speaking nothing but respect of their rival or of inclusion with girls, and celebrating every goal by dancing with joy.

All the while, Leonel feels that a new dawn has arrived. Watching those children who have been denied the right to play by the war in his country, he feels that the time has come for them to play a new game. A game he is not willing for them to lose.
Abandoned house in Bellavista, Bojayá, from where more than 1000 people were displaced after the massacre in 2002.
The football field and houses of Bellavista have been corroded by the forest after 17 years of abandonment.
Leonel tells us that this is the school he attended before the massacre and looks at what was once the blackboard.
More than 300 children and young people arrive in Bojayá to play at the Football and Peace festival organised by Gol & Paz.
Boys and girls participating in the first part of the football session led by Leonel.
Children of the new Bellavista are preparing to start the Football for Peace Festival.
Boys and girls from the different communities of Bojayá meet to play football for the first time in their lives.
Young leaders from Bojayá meet in Bellavista to participate in the Football for Peace Festival organised by Gol & Paz.
Young people from the region’s indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities play a joint football match, allowing the union of cultures and the rebirth of football.
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

Haley Carter
Common Goal Member & Former Assistant Coach, Afghanistan Women’s National Football Team

A GAME FOR ALL

Whether kicking a ball around with young Iraqi Messi fans on deployment with the US Marines or as a coach for the Afghanistan Women’s National Team, Texan-born Haley Carter has experienced the interplay of football and conflict in a variety of contexts. In her own life, the football pitch has offered a safe place, while the sport has served as a form of stress release and a source of confidence.

We sat down with the retired professional goalkeeper and Common Goal member on the occasion of the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace to discover more about how these experiences have shaped her holistic and inclusive vision of football – as a game for all.
How did football become such an important part of your life and, in what way did it give you a sense of security in the face of pressure or adversity?

I got into it at a really young age. I started playing at four years old through a local YMCA. I was the only girl on the team, we were called 'The Tornados' (laughs) and it just became the love of my life. It was my refuge, if you will. And it was always like that for me.

What later led you from playing to coaching?

I took on coaching because I wanted to inspire others to approach the game the way that I approach the game. Of course, not everybody’s going to see the game the same way that I see the game. I understand that, but to have the opportunity to influence lives through the game and to sort of give back what the game has given me. I mean, I’ve travelled all over the world. I’ve met all of these amazing people, I made my friends through the game, it’s given me so much and so, to have the opportunity to give that back... and Afghanistan is the perfect example of that, because I’d seen the power of the game in my own life and the confidence that it gave me and the sense of empowerment that it gave me, because I was often the only woman playing and I was comfortable with that and it became a game-changer for me.

What made you comfortable? Was it because you were talented?

I think so, I mean it helps when you’re good! (laughs) But I think just playing over time, I became comfortable with it. I was also comfortable with it because everyone else seemed comfortable with it. You know I was in an environment where everyone was ok with it. If you can keep the ball, it helps! But, I think playing over time gave me that confidence. It wasn’t just about being the only girl. You know, when I was younger I wasn’t really that outgoing, I was kind of a homebody, so I didn’t like travelling on my own and I was very anxious about meeting new people and inserting myself into a new environment, putting myself out there and taking on risks associated with ‘Perhaps, these people won’t like me, they might not think that I’m cool or funny or whatever’. I learned through the game to do that and to figure that out. Whether it was at a regional camp or whether it was a college camp or it was in college, the game put me in new environments with new people I’d never met before and it sort of forced me to come out of my shell and learn how to interact with people. Now I can walk into a room with people I don’t know and feel comfortable initiating a conversation and breaking that ice, whereas, as a kid, I would never have felt comfortable with that.

You have experienced the game in situations of conflict – as a US Marine on deployment in Iraq, and working together with those affected by it, as Assistant Coach of the Afghanistan Women’s National Team. How has this shaped your view of football?

I’ve always known the power of the game, but seeing it first-hand makes a difference and interacting with people whose lives have genuinely been changed through it makes a difference as well. I mean, my experiences are first world problems, right. So, I wasn’t very good at interacting with people, so I learnt how to do that. Especially in Afghanistan, the amount of trauma and the amount of violence and the amount of stress and anxiety that the women I coached deal with on a daily basis can be overwhelming. To see how the game influences them and to personally be involved with them, be with them on their journey and how they’re experiencing the game and the calmness that they’re getting from the game is a really empowering and humbling experience. And I would say, same thing in Iraq. The ability of the game to change your perception of things and how you interact with people and how you manage stress, it’s overwhelming. Whenever I was outside the wire in Falluja and interacting with kids, on civil affairs projects and what not, they all love Messi. Even there. That was in 2007 and so I was 23, 24 years old and made a connection with these 8, 9, 10, 11-year-old Iraq kids with whom I might otherwise not have had a connection. But the minute you start talking about football, they’re interested, they want to know what’s going on and they want to kick a ball around. They want to talk about Messi, they want to talk about Champions.
League. These kids may not live in a great environment, they may not have a whole lot of resources, but they've got a TV and they've got a satellite dish and they're watching the game and they want to talk about that and their faces just immediately light up. That's a really cool thing to see, to experience. I've always known the power of the game, but to see it first-hand and in an environment where it really unites communities and societies, that's a really big deal.

**Working in situations of conflict or with people affected by it comes with an array of challenges. What were the main challenges you faced working with the Afghanistan Women's National team and how did you tackle them?**

Probably the biggest one is managing the dynamics, because you've got players who are growing up in the Bay Area (of San Francisco), whose parents were refugees, you have players from Europe, either they were refugees or their parents were refugees, you have a player coming from Australia, and then, of course, you have your players who are in Kabul. Some of our players who are in the US or in Europe have travelled back to visit family, but some of them have never been to Afghanistan.

We really, really stressed every single time that it's one team, one Afghanistan and that, together, the team would be unbreakable. The minute that they start fracturing, is the minute that our team loses its power. So, that was hands down our biggest challenge. And small things helped, you know, like rooming assignments. We try always to make them as diverse as possible, so that girls from the Bay Area weren't rooming with each other, we tried to spread that out and use every opportunity that we had...activities, training sessions...As we worked on that, other challenges worked themselves out. We found that as they got to know each other as people, they realised that there really weren't that many differences.

**Whatever we did, we had to be aware of the perceptions of our team and the actions of our team and what was happening when we were together, because the reality was that some of our players would go back to Kabul and would face ridicule if something negative happened, whereas the other players would go back to the US or to Europe and continue with their lives. So, we had to be very cognisant of that.**

**What did you - in your role as Assistant Coach - bring to the Afghanistan Women's National team?**

A little bit of everything. We're all a jack of all trades! For me, and I think for Kelly, too, to bring our professional level of experience from the game was really important because those players don't know what they don't know. They've never had professional training before. They don't know what they should look like and what the expectations should be competing at an international level. For us, it was really about making the investment and opening them up to that and letting them see: 'Hey, at a professional level, this is what you should be expecting and this is what we should look like and what the expectations should be competing at an international level.' For us, it was really about making the investment and opening them up to that and letting them see: 'Hey, at a professional level, this is what you should be expecting and this is what we should look like and what the expectations should be competing at an international level.'

**What did it entail to set the team up for success?**

You know, we couldn't train in Afghanistan. We had to get them into places - neutral sites - (in countries for which I could also get visas) and create an environment where they could go and just be themselves. One of the things we had to consider with the players from Kabul was that they can't go to gyms. We had to design body weight workouts that they could literally do in their bedroom. So, they could work on their fitness, but they could do it in a safe place, in their own environment. They could do it in their own privacy. A lot of people just don't realise that. Those were the things we had to think about. They would come into camp unfit and the excuse would be: "Well, we can't go to the gym," so it occurred to us. "We need to make workouts that they can do at home." So, our strength and conditioning coach - our exercise scientist - he put together a workout.

I think you have to recognise those sorts of nuances when you're coaching. And Afghanistan is a very specific example. But you have to recognise the nuances of the players you're working with and the situations they're facing.

"Being aware of that and knowing triggers for players is important, because for me providing a ‘safe space’ isn’t just a physical thing, it is a mental and emotional space as well.”

**How would you transfer creating such ‘safe spaces’ to other contexts?**

I think we see it a lot too here in the US, especially in urban areas, you start talking about trauma-informed coaching and Kelly talked about this in the past, that it's not any different from 'normal' coaching. You want to help your players be professional and the reality as well is sometimes it's important that you be aware of what your players have faced in the past. Trauma-informed coaching for me personally has been very important and just understanding how to interact with players who have dealt with extensive trauma, whether it's family trauma or societal trauma that they've experienced in the past that they bring to the game. Because all of us bring our own personal experiences. Being aware of that and knowing triggers for players is important, because for me providing a ‘safe space’ isn’t just a physical thing, it is a mental and emotional space as well. Learning how to incentivise your players through motivation, through positive leadership, through an understanding of where they're coming from, where they've dealt with and what they go home to every night.
I’ve been really fortunate to even get the question for, but I would have just been silly to say no to them. I think that is why I find it so hard to say no. You never know what’s going to come out of it. An initiative I heard about was particularly excited to get involved in was Common Goal, which I joined last September.

Can you tell us how that came about and how you wish to use your membership to have an impact?

I heard about Common Goal through Alex (Morgan) and Pinoe (Megan Rapinoe) and wondered why more managers aren’t getting involved, so I immediately reached out to Common Goal as a manager and wanted to get in. Because I think that’s something that shouldn’t just be players. As I said, I want to be as inclusive as possible. I think it should be administrators, I think it should be board members. I think that is very, very important. Even if you’re a manager, I think it should be across the gambit. I know there are players out there making some major, major dollars, but I think all of us can contribute to the game. The more inclusive you are, the more powerful your impact.

I opted for my Common Goal dollars to go to Spirit of Soccer in Iraq, because I’ve been there, I’ve experienced it, I know the power of the game in that country. And I’ve witnessed South East Asia, I’ve been to Laos, Thailand and Cambodia, so I know the power of it there as well. For me, I think it’s just important that, personally, every opportunity I have to use the game as a platform, I need to use it.

2019 is the year of the FIFA Women’s World Cup. With the spotlight that this casts on women’s football: Is this an opportunity to celebrate or to advocate? I think that the Women’s World Cup is an opportunity that can highlight both the positives of what’s happening in the women’s game but also the negatives. We can’t forget about what’s happening in Afghanistan, we can’t forget about what happened with Trinidad and Tobago in the last World Cup qualifiers. We can’t forget about what’s going on in Colombia and South America and some of the struggles that those women’s players are facing and we can’t forget about the Pakistan Women’s National team that hasn’t played in a competitive match since 2014. I think what’s important is we need to remember that we can use the Women’s World Cup both as an opportunity to celebrate the women’s game and the best women’s games in the world. We also have to remind ourselves that those teams are so great because they’re being invested in. We also have to use this as an opportunity to focus on improving the parity of those other teams and making sure that enough investment is happening, making sure that any FIFA dollars that are going to these member associations are being put to work appropriately, the resources are being allocated appropriately. I think it’s an important time to also hold FIFA accountable through their regional associations to ensure that member associations are being held accountable and that they’re truly investing in the women’s game. And I think that every four years that we have a Women’s World Cup, it needs to be the same dialogue and it should always be the same dialogue. We’re celebrating the best in the game, but we also need to make sure that we’re highlighting those gaps.

When you say: “We’re celebrating” and “we’re highlighting those gaps”, to whom are you referring? Who is responsible for making change happen?

We have to be as inclusive as we can, because on the women’s side in order for me to, in my experience, get real buy-in in the women’s game, real investment in the women’s game, you have to have male allies, that’s just the reality of it. So, I like to approach it from an inclusive standpoint.

The reality, too, is that the power positions are held by men and we would be silly to be exclusive. Of course, I’d like to see that ratio change, but we have to get ourselves in the room. So, we have to have those allies. We have to have men who are in those positions of power, who have an influence, to buy in. Without that, it becomes very difficult. You know, it’s easier to make change from within, so once you get in the room, you can make that change. But it can often be difficult to be in that room, to be a part of that conversation without having those male allies, so it has to be everyone’s effort. But they have to do it seriously. You can’t just be checking a box. It’s so transparent when that happens. And it’s almost worse. Some people might argue, “Well, at least they’re doing this and are conversing,” but I argue, “Well, they’re only doing that!”

So, I like to approach the game holistically and I am always pushing for more opportunities for women, whether it’s in coaching, playing, developing clubs. But I think it’s important that we approach it holistically because the opportunities for boys and young men are just as important when we’re talking about the game’s ability to inspire peace and social change.
From Opponents to Teammates

When Palestinians and Israelis cross paths, it is usually as opposing parties of the conflict that has claimed countless lives on both sides. As part of their broad range of Sport in the Service of Peace activities, the Peres Center for Peace & Innovation has been using the ‘Twinned Peace Sports Schools’ programme since 2002 to unite young people from different communities on the football pitch. In this safe space, beyond the boundaries of the conflict, these young people have the opportunity to tackle their previously held opinions of the other and, together, lead the way towards a more peaceful future.
Recognising the shortcomings of politics to address the region’s challenges, Israel’s ninth President, Shimon Peres, sought a way to bridge the gap between politics and civil society: In 1996, The Peres Center for Peace & Innovation was born. Six years later, the ‘Twinned Peace Sports Schools’ programme was launched as part of the organisation’s efforts in Peace Education. It is now one of the longest running programmes in the region using sport as a peacebuilding tool, and is one of the Peres Center’s most enduring initiatives.

The idea behind the ‘Twinned Peace Sports Schools’ programme was to use football to bring people from both “sides” together in one safe space, in an atmosphere of cooperation, trust and mutual respect. The football pitch was to serve as a place – beyond the usual locations where the conflict is played out – where those involved could find common ground on neutral territory. Playing together, they could become acquainted with the “other” and have the opportunity to change their opinions of each other. Football would also step in as a method of communication to overcome the language barrier between Arabic and Hebrew.

What was a simple idea on paper, was a challenging endeavour on the pitch. It was clear that getting Israeli and Palestinian children and young people to play together on one team would not be possible from day one, it would be a process. Though, as the name of the programme suggests, Israeli and Palestinian communities are first selected and then “twinned” through an afterschool framework creating “sports schools”, in the initial phase the groups remain in their community groups, training separately. These sessions are led by coaches instructed prior to the programme in its different components: methodologies, like ‘FairPlay’ and football and activities, such as teambuilding and peace games or fun language learning through football.

The coaches meet the young players for weekly sessions in their community groups to pave the way for an encounter of both sides that will begin taking place on a monthly basis for the remainder of the year. The very first time the Israeli and Palestinian team buses roll up to the same pitch, it appears at first glance, as if ‘Team Palestine’ and ‘Team Israel’ will play against each other. Then the young footballers discover that they are all wearing the same football kit, and have been assigned to a team with a fifty-fifty ratio of Palestinian and Israeli players.

The girls and boys participating in the programme come from different communities across the region. As Twinned Peace Sports Schools (TPSS) Project Manager, Leen Boujo, explains: “We work on two levels: cross-border, i.e. choosing participants from the Israeli side and from the Palestinian side. The second level is ‘in-border’: Arab and Jewish communities within Israel.” Across these sectors, defining exactly which communities to work with is an intricate process based on a variety of factors. Leen begins listing the questions the project team ponders accordingly: “Is it because the area is extremely tense? Is it because there is a very strong need and demand within the community? Is it because you want to continue a process with a community you have already worked with? Or have you achieved your goals there and should now move on to a different community?”

As one of the very first coaches to get involved in the programme, Moshe Mosafi is a true TPSS veteran. Even after so many years and at age 70, the retired P.E. teacher is as engaged as ever. He trains a girls’ football team taking part in the programme in Sderot. The town is on the front line of the conflict and, consequently, a permanent fixture of the TPSS programme. Located less than a mile from Gaza, Sderot is one of the main targets of Qassam rocket attacks from the strip. “In regions such as this, the ‘other side’ is perceived as very enemy-like,” Leen comments, “The people are very scared.” Moshe Mosafi, who has lived in the area for over 25 years and witnessed the conflict unfold here, believes that the TPSS programme is needed today more than ever before, due to the increasingly precarious relations between Israelis and Palestinians: “Even during my army service, the conflict was not like it is today. There simply was not the same tension that there is today.”

When working in such areas where the conflict has become an innate part of the population’s identity, programme activities can only be realised upon a strong foundation of trust. It is a tentative process. “At the beginning of the year, we hold a parents’ gathering,” Leen explains, “So they can come along and hear about what the project does. It’s not easy for people to accept this kind of work, especially when it involves their kids. The parents from the Israeli side know that their kids are going to meet Palestinians that they know just for being terrorists. ‘They want to kill us!’ the say.” Palestinian parents raise parallel concerns: “They are expected to send their kids into Israel,” Leen continues, “which is something that is very difficult for them to do. ‘What if something happens, I can’t even reach my children,’ they say to us. So, you need a lot of trust.”

Moshe Mosafi adds that the role of the parents is important beyond the programme’s outset: “We need to engage the parents to get them supporting their kids on this journey, and reinforcing the programme’s goals. Parental involvement significantly improves the outcomes of the programme.”

It is difficult to imagine any parent escaping Mosafi’s enthusiasm for the programme, his passion for football and belief in its ability to bring people together. “I have loved football for as long as I can remember,” he smiles. “As a child, I used to go outside and my foot would immediately be reaching for the ball.” At the time, without money for a ‘real’ football, he would improvise by stuffing cloth into his socks and shaping them into a sphere.

Today, equipped with better tools to play the sport, his passion for it is unwavering: “Football is a game that all of us love. Football provides its own world, a place where we can interact completely separately from the outside world.”

Tala Jaber, a 20-year-old Palestinian coach involved in the programme, agrees. She says that through the programme, not only her participants, but she herself has benefitted from meeting Israelis in a context beyond the conflict: “Since I live in the West Bank and do not often get the opportunity to interact with people from the ‘other side’, I found that the programme gave me the possibility to share my story, thoughts and beliefs without being scared or feeling hesitation.”

The young woman from Jericho is one of the programme’s ‘Language Trainers’ assigned to each of the groups of 15-20 participants along with a football trainer. Teaching their group basic words and phrases in either Arabic or Hebrew, is only one part of the Language Trainer’s role. “We have many different activities for the kids from the two sides, such as icebreakers, language activities, FairPlay and other fun activities,” Tala explains, “My role is to break the ice between the girls and let them feel safe enough to play with each other, especially giving them the opportunity to talk with one another, even though they speak two different languages. We believe that sport helps us to overcome the boundaries of language, it acts as a common non-verbal language for all.”
Becoming involved in the programme, also meant overcoming other boundaries for Tala: “To be honest, my family was supportive of my involvement, but some friends of mine said the project was ‘normalising’ the conflict and said that it was in vain.” She adds that: “Living in between conflicting communities is very challenging and scary, even our interaction with Israelis in terms of doing such programmes for peace and coexistence can be dangerous if people who are against the idea of the interaction with the other side find out.” This, however, has only served to confirm her conviction that the programme is necessary and fueled her resolve to continue: “This is why I believe our work is so important – we must change this reality,” adding, “I know that this is a long process and change cannot be built in a day, but the more people believe and support this process, the better our reality can be. I experience this every time I play with the girls or watch them playing: I see the hope of unity and coexistence.”

20-year-old Atalya Gilad, an Israeli coach from Tel Aviv, shares her experience of the process that turns opposing sides into one team: “I remember the first joint activity when the Palestinian girls and Israeli girls first met. They didn’t even want to hold each other’s hand. In our last joint activity, they hugged each other goodbye.”

Atalya became part of the programme when she was searching for an alternative to military service: “In Israel at age 18 everybody must join the army, but there is also an alternative way to contribute to your country outside of the military system which is the national service. When looking for a place to volunteer for my service, I fortunately found the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation.”

Growing up in the north of Israel in a small village with just 50 families and only moving to Tel Aviv at the age of 16, she hadn’t previously encountered people from Palestinian backgrounds: “Although we live in the same geographical space, we don’t really have many opportunities to meet each other on a non-political platform.”

The ‘platform’ the programme offers, Atalya says, is one “where, for a few hours, we forget about all the internal wars and the conflicts and just focus on the game and on our new friends.” Here, the players meet each other, she adds, “just as kids who want to have fun.” This, in turn, will enable them to “grow into a world where they are not scared of the ‘other side’ because, there, we are all on the same side.”

A moment when Shahid Awatleh, an 11-year-old Palestinian programme participant from Jericho on the West Bank, felt most acutely that the group had become “one side”, was when “I got injured in one of the matches and all of the players stopped playing and came to help and they did their best to make me feel better.”

“Football can connect us because we play on the same team and help each other succeed. We play together, but we also get to know each other.”

LEAH TAMAR PERETS, 11, TPSS PLAYER

Her fellow player, Leah Tamar Perets, an Israeli from Beit Shemesh, recounts her experience of how football enabled her group to become one team: “When you play together, you get to know each other closely. Football can connect us because we play on the same team and help each other succeed. We play together, but we also get to know each other. We get to find out the story of each girl, where she comes from and what she loves.” This, she says, leads to the eventual realisation that “we are very similar.”

The culmination of each activity year of the programme is the “Mini Mondial” tournament. All of the year’s participants from the Peres Center’s wider Sport in the Service of Peace programmes gather for a festive event to play together in mixed teams. They are joined by an illustrious crowd of spectators: ambassadors from around the world, local mayors, the region’s celebrities and famous footballers. “The event is to celebrate their journey over the past year and to show all of the boys and girls taking part, that they have the support from their idols and all corners of society,” Leon explains.

In the programme year 2018/2019, the Peres Center’s Sport in the Service of Peace programmes, including ‘Twinned Peace Sports Schools’, are engaging around 500 young people in communities in Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Lod, Ramla, Beit Shemesh, Tel Sheva, Beer Sheva, Sderot, Jericho, Al-Nu’aim, Jerusalem, Kalanswa and Kfar Saba. Since the programmes’ initiation, over 22,000 participants and some 60 trainers from more than 35 regions have been engaged through the programme. Every year, the Twinned Peace Sports Schools programme continues to introduce young Israelis and Palestinians to each other through football and keep the ball rolling towards the hope of a future on the same side.
Waking up in Gaza City every day, immediately the worrying begins. We Gazans worry about many things. Mainly for the children of our poorest families, for whom life is getting harder and harder. Since 2007 we have lived under a siege without an end in sight and the situation is only getting worse. My generation had all our hopes taken away from us along with our childhood. Yet young Gazans today have spent their entire lives fenced off from the world. For them, hope never existed.

In football, I found a form of escape. My obsession in life was to win, the rest didn’t matter. I thought only from one game to the next, nothing else mattered, I just had to win. My passion has taken me far in a game I have always loved but the further I went, the more the game’s meaning changed: more than needing to win, we need more than ever to be able to play.

Protests are a normal part of life here in Gaza. Every week over the last year many people march to the Gaza-Israel border to plea for resettlement. 30th March marked the one year-anniversary of the ‘Great March of Return’* and organisers counted one million protestors, half of the entire population of the strip. What they don’t tell you is how many will return with Israeli bullets in their bodies, needing amputations or metal rods attached to limbs in order to keep living.

While some wait at the border and throw rocks at Israeli armed forces, others are demonstrating against rising taxes and the terrible living conditions across the strip.

The Gazan youth protest because they are frustrated and desperate. They study for degrees that will not lead to jobs because here we have no work. They live knowing they can’t leave and protest because they don’t know what else to do, even though they are aware that the danger of being shot is real.

Just to be able to have something to do, Gazans are risking one of the only things we have: our bodies. Our bodies are our only instrument in our confinement. Our inability to travel freely means we must stay on our feet. Our world is a physical one. We live in narrow spaces, inside a small city. So we walk everywhere we can. Life here is in the streets.

This is also where we play sport. It is one of the only places that’s ours, somewhere we can afford to be. Where no one can stop us or take it away. It’s where we connect with our neighbours and friends. It’s here where we first learn to play football.

Unfortunately, ways to escape our situation are limited and football is one of the few things that allows us to forget, even if it’s only for a moment. If you ask people in Gaza how they spend their time, they will tell you: “Meeting in cafes to watch football with friends.”

I was spotted by Al-Hilal Gaza when
I was playing in the streets with friends. Through this club, I got the opportunity to play for my national team for three years and participate outside the walls of this prison. Playing for my country was the greatest feeling I've ever had in my life and something I'm so proud and honoured to have done. Even now, it’s hard to describe what it meant to fly the flag of my country where so many remain trapped.

Yet, I wish I knew then, what I know now. The methods I learned at ‘Palestine: Sports for Life’ have totally changed my understanding and mentality towards sport and how it can be used. When I was a player, I was selfish. I wanted it to be only me in the picture but now I want a totally different photo.

I was greatly affected by my training and the response to methods from fellow Palestinians. The reality is that not everyone can be a professional athlete but the sport has so much more to offer than only winning - there are higher goals and objectives that mean much more than any title or award.

Three years ago, while holding trials to find new players, I encountered a young footballer who left a lasting impression on me about what the game can and should stand for. His name was Nidal, he was 15 years old and only had one hand, the other had been amputated. Our ignorance meant that my colleagues and I first only saw him through the lens of sympathy. Though he shocked us, he was an amazing player, a joy to watch and destined for greater things. Yet the rules dictated that due to his disability, he did not qualify as a player. I fought against the rules and negotiated through multiple discussions to make sure he was included. When I see him play today and witness his passion and confidence in front of so many people it makes me so proud.

Playing abroad has helped me to understand what people think of Palestinians. They hold on to stereotypes that we Palestinians are not nice and don’t deserve to play. But, after playing against us, they found that we are normal people with nice attitudes, who love life, who simply want to live. They were so surprised!

The road to peace is a long one. Competing outside the walls of Gaza is our way of showing people that we Palestinians are not only connected to political problems. Playing with other teams and countries is a way of networking and of uniting as human beings. Through sport not only can we introduce ourselves to the world but also to each other as new and better people, on one team.

Defeat used to be a dirty word. It felt like a place at the end of the world where I never wanted to go. Now I believe otherwise.

“It’s not the end of the story. In defeat, we can learn, it gives us hope to try again.”

“On 30th March 2018, a six-week campaign dubbed ‘the Great March of Return’ (Arabic: يركبلا ةدوعلا ةریسم) was launched at the Gaza Strip, near the Gaza-Israel border, to demand that Palestinian refugees and their descendants be allowed to return to their ancestral homes in what is now Israel.”

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A POST-MATCH PLEA FOR PEACE:

Didier Drogba and the Ivorian Civil War

Having just qualified for the 2006 World Cup, the Ivorian team sang and danced joyously. Conducting the team’s cacophonous celebrations was Ivory Coast’s number 11. The year was 2005 and Didier Drogba, or “Didi” as he is known, was singing from the very top of an already glittering professional career. Not only was he leading the line at one of Europe’s biggest clubs in Chelsea, he had just booked his place at the pinnacle of competition, helping end his country’s 76-year wait to qualify for its first ever World Cup.

After a 3-1 victory in Sudan to secure their place, scenes of jubilation from within the dressing room were relayed to the world. Amidst this outpouring of euphoria, then captain Cyril Domoraud, had invited a member of the media to join them. While filming for Radio Télévision Ivoirienne, Didi was handed a microphone.

“Men and women of the Ivory Coast…” he began earnestly, momentarily quelling the celebrations of his teammates. With an unwavering gaze, he looked straight into the lens and continued: “From the north, south, centre, and west. We proved today that all Ivorians can co-exist and play together with a shared aim: to qualify for the World Cup.”

Drogba stood surrounded by his teammates, a group hailing from all corners of what had become a divided country, their arms draped around him and each other. They stood in silence, nodding in unwavering unison to acknowledge their striker’s every word.

The player idolised like a king then dropped to his knees, followed one by one by his loyal teammates. The players raised their hands to their heads, their arms turned towards the camera, echoing Drogba’s plea: “Pardonnez!” – “Forgive! Forgive one another!” Over the outbreak of desperate cries, from Kolo Touré, Emmanuel Eboué to Arouna Koné, from Muslim and Christian, to Baolé and Touré, Emmanuel Eboué to Arouna Koné, palms turned towards the camera, one by his loyal teammates. The players dropped to his knees, followed one by one by his loyal teammates. The players dropped to his knees, followed one by one by his loyal teammates.

While grappling with its first encounters with democracy, in 2002 the team’s cacophonous celebrations was Ivory Coast’s number 11. The year was 2005 and Didier Drogba, or “Didi” as he is known, was singing from the very top of an already glittering professional career. Not only was he leading the line at one of Europe’s biggest clubs in Chelsea, he had just booked his place at the pinnacle of competition, helping end his country’s 76-year wait to qualify for its first ever World Cup.

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Rising to their feet, smiles once again spreading across their faces, the group resumed their jubilatory song to the same tune, however this time with revised lyrics: “We want to have fun, so stop firing your guns.” Drogba’s appeal came amidst heightening tensions in an already bloody civil war that had been raging for three years. With the lives of over 4,000 Ivorians already claimed and over a million internally displaced, the country remained locked in a violent stalemate.

In late 2005, as the country prepared to go to the polls, threats of worsening violence between the rebel-held Muslim majority north and a government-supported Christian south saw the government postpone the upcoming vote. The disavowal from constitutional law painted a dire image without resolution in sight. Continuous fighting upending elections, so crucial to finding solution to this end to a 33-year presidency held since by ten- authors opposed to the government, to share the country, the rebels to take refuge amongst like-minded dissenters. The entanglement of a complex web of ideologies was super- seded by territory, cutting the nation in two.

Across the country, families were separated in a crisis reaching every home. Violent flare-ups and political deadlock brought forth in the lack of resolution the increasing need for mutuality.

Through Ivory Coast’s national team, a national institution truly repre- sentative of its diversity remained func- tioning. The reception of the game itself has often lead football to be likened to religion. Amidst the ensuing chaos in the country, the sport remained worshipped by all. Never more timely was the arrival of a golden generation of players, a crop more talented than those to ever wear the famous orange shirt, playing across the globe to thousands of spectators every week.

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Their success on the pitch demon- strated the possibility for Ivorians irre- spective of background to gather in harmony and work together in shared struggle. In those people, players began to once again identify themselves in one another. Equally so, as those citizens saw only their country through their players and not divisions, the players returned the sentiment. Thinking not of their his- toric achievement, instead, they thought of peace.

Later described to British newspa- per The Telegraph by Drogba as “just something I did instinctively”; a moment amidst an emotional wave shared by all of the players that “hailed what was hap- pening in our country.” Yet, the sentiment saw Drogba and his teammates met by a crowd of thousands awaiting their return at Abidjan airport. For days, the images had been repeatedly beamed across the nation’s television screens.

A week following the scenes from the dressing room, serving President Laurent Gbagbo publicly expressed his hope that football could become an example of national unity and a ceasefire was temporarily agreed.

Later that year, upon being awarded the prestigious title of African Player of the Year, Drogba continued his efforts to help restore peace. He travelled to Bouaké, one of the cities occupied by rebels opposed to the government, to share the personal accolade with his adoring fans. Witnessing thousands of people take to the streets for him, a man from the south, another idea sparked in Drogba’s mind. What if, he thought, Les Éléphants could play their next home game, not in Abidjan, but rather in Bouaké, as a true symbol of healing?

Now team captain, Drogba saw his wish realised. On 3rd June 2007, the Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo and the rebel leader, Guillaume Soro, were in Bouaké’s Stade Municipal singing the national anthem side by side before the match between the Ivorian National Team and Madagascar kicked off.

“We have the two sides together, to sing in unison the hymn of my country was very special. I felt Côte d’Ivoire was born again,” declared the striker. The momentous game ended with a 5-0 victory for Ivory Coast. The next morning the title page headline of Ivorian newspaper ‘Fraternité Matin’ read: “Reconciliation through football: Five goals to end five years of war.”
Almost 14 years after Didier Drogba’s famed changing room speech, during which he expressed an emotive appeal for peace to the Ivorian nation, we catch up with the football legend to reflect on that historic moment. Recently retired from the professional game, the former Chelsea and Ivory Coast striker tells us how he intends to continue raising the voice that his status bestowed upon him to advocate for peace.

“Impact of the Speech”

In 2005, right after the Ivorian National team qualified for the 2006 FIFA World Cup, and in the midst of the celebrations, you stood up and sent a message advocating for reconciliation and peace in your country. This occasion shaped your future, not only as a football player, but also as a peace leader.

What paved the way to that moment? When did you first become aware that you could play a key role as a peace mediator in your country?

I started to play on the National team in 2002. During my first selections, we were playing at Félix Houphouët-Boigny stadium (Editor’s note: in Abidjan, Ivory Coast) and Laurent Gbagbo, the President at that time, came with security guards around him; there were militaries with heavy weapons. And I was thinking that we are just playing a football match, we were supposed to share, to be happy. But there was that fear and I felt that there was something that was not normal. And, indeed, a few weeks later, there was a coup and the country was divided into two separate parts. We were told that the Ivorians were not talking to each other anymore, that even neighbours were not speaking to each other anymore because they belonged to different backgrounds, different ethnic groups. There are different ethnic groups in Ivory Coast, so there was a lot of tension. And we, as players, we were 22 or 24 players from every region of the country, from the north, the south, the east, the west of the country, we were all together. We really enjoyed playing together, we were not thinking like our parents. I remember when I played against Fabien Barthez and William Gallas, we were singing and were happy to play against the French team, there was a joie de vivre.

On this qualification day, there was euphoria and we all had a special thought for the Ivorian people. We were very proud to represent Ivory Coast in the World Cup for the first time in the history of this small country. Of course, I didn’t think ahead of time about saying this. We were just singing and dancing, but I really felt I had to convey that message. Luckily, I was heard in Ivory Coast. I was lucky because this had an impact in general, especially on the youngsters of my country. I was able to take advantage of the neutrality I had because I grew up in France, I belonged to nobody and this is why I could give this message. In the moment, I didn’t think it could have such an impact. During more than six months, it was on all TV news every day. And it helped in cooling down the tension.

Almost 14 years after Didier Drogba’s famed changing room speech, during which he expressed an emotive appeal for peace to the Ivorian nation, we catch up with the football legend to reflect on that historic moment. Recently retired from the professional game, the former Chelsea and Ivory Coast striker tells us how he intends to continue raising the voice that his status bestowed upon him to advocate for peace.

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FOOTBALL V HOMOPHOBIA

MAKING THE SPORT WELCOME TO ALL

By Sam Cook

For a semi-professional team hailing from England’s sixth tier, gaining unprecedented levels of international headlines is no mean feat. Yet on the 16th February of this year, as the social media campaign of Altrincham Football Club came to its climax, flooding the press in the process, it seems their attempts didn’t quite manage to reach all 1,328 visitors on the day.
Come kick-off during his team’s home game against Bradford Park Avenue, club director Bill Waterson was still explaining to a number of fans inside the Moss Lane ground why their team were not sporting their usual red and white stripes. Though stripes remained, the two-colour binary quite appropriately made way and instead the team emerged from the tunnel clad in shirts modelled solely on the LGBT rainbow Pride Flag.

“Why are we doing this? We play in red and white don’t we?” some perplexed spectators were heard asking from the terraces. “There’s even been a few older fans” recounted Waterson, “to whom we’ve had to explain what the rainbow flag is, believe it or not.”

Altrincham F.C.’s stand of solidarity with the LGBT+ community and the Football v Homophobia campaign marks their commitment to help rid football of the evil that is homophobia. Their pledge didn’t correspond to conceptions of what a footballer should be. It likewise illuminated the failure of a support system, whereupon instead of the solace of a united community, Fashanu found ignorance and malignity. In the wake of the tragedy, progress was stifled before it even began. The fatality enclosed the possibility for the following generations to revel in greater freedoms, and instead left a vacuum of fear in which the game remains currently stuck.

In a sport reaching the lives of millions worldwide, Fashanu’s alienation proved that his identity as homosexual and footballer didn’t correspond to conceptions of what a footballer should be. It likewise illuminated the failure of a support system, whereupon instead of the solace of a united community, Fashanu found ignorance and malignity. In the wake of the tragedy, progress was stifled before it even began. The fatality enclosed the possibility for the following generations to revel in greater freedoms, and instead left a vacuum of fear in which the game remains currently stuck.

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The frequency and persistence of such incidents suggests that, despite attempts to push intolerance out, undercurrents of discrimination remain within the mainstream. Gabriel Camargo described women’s football as ‘a tremendous breeding ground for sexism’, only to be absolved through a meagre issue of apology. Camargo’s comments join similar reports from the BBC in Wales in November of last year, where a 13-year-old was taunted in a similar manner by her peers and then advised by her teachers to refrain from playing. The suggestion, is that far and wide a focus upon the sexuality of female players remains a crude reminder of the work yet to be undertaken in an otherwise rapidly progressing sport. More worrying, however, is the breadth of which derogatory conflations between female participation and homosexuality are continually being used interchangeably as a slur.

Two weeks after the event in Colombia, the men’s game was subject to homophobic comments from the home supporters. The incident followed a backlash toward another pro-LGBT+ rights charity Stonewall and its Rainbow Laces campaign: receiving over 43,000 negative reactions online solely in response to Manchester United’s appeal of support on twitter. Whether heeding from high-standing stakeholders, fans attending the games or online abuse, evidence shows a persisting problem within the game, regardless of gender, surrounding notions of identity.

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out while still playing, holds a multitude of problems caused by an inherent unwillingness to engage in reflection. It places focus upon the inability of individual men to open up, ignoring issues across other areas of the game and leaving ourselves, alongside the structures of the game, exempt from asking how we as a society can be more accommodating.

As Altrincham F.C. takes those steps, the increasing commercialisation of the men’s game has become entwined with conceptions of the sport’s improvement. Diverting from the well-trodden and highly lucrative path is becoming ever-increasingly fenced off through fears of disrupting the game we all know and love. Yet, we must ask ourselves, who is really benefitting and at what cost?

Without making lazy comparisons between the two branches of the game, so clearly at different phases in their lifespans and facing unparalleled challenges, the women’s game paints a more inclusive picture. In-team relationships, partners on opposing sides, and openly gay players at the highest level are not exceptional in women’s football and suggest a much safer space for individuals who is really benefitting and at what cost? Though the impact of such initiatives may not immediately bear fruit, Play Proud and the support of Football Association chairman Greg Clarke, that male players should not come out is becoming ever-increasingly fenced off through fears of disrupting the game we all know and love. Yet, we must ask ourselves, who is really benefitting and at what cost?

The likes of Megan Rapinoe and Abby Wambach, integral to the most successful international team in history for the US, have both spoken of the positive impacts of transparency upon their playing careers. Their skill sets at an optimum, are both an asset to the sport and society.

The greater transparency, afforded to Rapinoe for example, has led to an engagement in activities off the pitch. Her role in the ‘Play Proud’ initiative, one committed to making football a welcoming environment for LGBT+ youth, gives further evidence that the relationship between football and identity can and should be harmonious. The aim of the initiative is to educate and train coaches to create caring and accepting team environments, aware of the positive impact this could have on a young person who is ‘closeted’, coming out, or simply in the process of discovering their own identity. As the initiative goes to pilot in the North America & the Caribbean region, Rapinoe has expressed regret at not being able to experience the benefits while she herself grew up.

Though initiatives like Play Proud and Football v Homophobia are fuelled by worrying findings, they are redefining methods to break through the existing structures that prop up homophobia in football. Intervening at a young age and placing emphasis on communal participation will hopefully ease the burden of individuals and help redefine the contours surrounding the image of a footballer. Though the impact of such initiatives may not immediately bear fruit, Play Proud and the support of Football v Homophobia from Altrincham, recently reciprocated by Conwy Borough, are shaping a new football culture. They are proving that, through fears of disrupting the game we all know and love, it must be made truly welcoming to all of its admirers.

Recommendations from the LGBT+ End of Season Survey:

• Robust action to be taken by football authorities and clubs in consultation with campaign groups and fans to ensure reporting systems are fit to purpose.

• Initiate or increase support from clubs, leagues and football authorities for Pride in Football and the establishment of LGBT+ fan groups, which provide many fans with the confidence to attend games.

• Greater investment in anti-homophobia/transphobia campaigns targeting all fans.

• National publishing of outcome data in relation to reports of homophobia and transphobia at games. Fans would benefit from knowing appropriate action is taken which could encourage greater reporting in the future.

Source: Pride in Football and Football v Homophobia report

OUT ON THE FIELD

AS LGBT+ WELCOMING TO PLAYERS WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBT+

OF PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES DO NOT BELIEVE TEAM SPORTS ARE WELCOMING TO PLAYERS WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBT+

Why did my favourite player have to come out? I’d rather not know... if I support a gay player, people might think I’m gay, too.

I’m afraid of being rejected if I don’t look a certain way.

Football is a boys’ game! Girls that play professionally don’t look very feminine.

WHAT IS HOMOPHOBIA ROOTED IN?

FEAR RELIGION MEDIA IGNORANCE EDUCATION FAMILY GEOGRAPHY
FEDEX EXPRESS AND UEFA FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN CO-FUND EMPLOYABILITY PROJECT

On 25th March, the two funding partners officially announced that they were supporting the programme aimed at equipping community organisations to deliver football-based employability programmes. A charitable grant, awarded under the community investment platform FedEx Cares and matched by UEFA Foundation for Children, will build the capacity of local sports organisations to structure and deliver football-based employability programmes in their communities. The project will be overseen by streetfootballworld and delivered by network member organisations in four locations – Policy Centre for Roma and Minorities (Romania), the Oltalom Sport Association (Hungary) and Sport Against Racism (Ireland) and Sport 4 Life (UK).

COMMON GOAL PROJECT: A LEARNING EXCHANGE FOR HIV/AIDS PREVENTION IN EAST AFRICA

Putting the power of collaboration into action, Common Goal is supporting TackleAfrica’s initiative of a learning exchange for HIV/AIDS prevention in East Africa. Moving the Goalposts Kilifi from Kenya, Soccer Without Borders Uganda and IDYDC in Tanzania will share their knowledge and expertise in staff exchanges and thus improve the quality of TackleAfrica’s HIV/AIDS prevention programmes in three East African countries. Delivering 500 HIV and SHRH football-based educational sessions over the course of this year, the project aims to increase female participation in football and sexual health services, as well as providing of clinical services, such as pitch-side HIV testing and condom distribution, or referrals to local clinics when necessary.

GERMAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDS PROJECT IN BURKINA FASO AND IVORY COAST

streetfootballworld, AEJT-CI (Association des Enfants et jeunes Travailleurs de Côte d’Ivoire) and Association Maia Bobo have teamed up for a two-year project funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The current project will build structures within the field of sport for development that, in turn, enable the reduction of HIV infections and the practice of FGM (Female Genital Mutilation). Through training sessions and football tournaments, the project aims to reach 3000 young girls and boys between the ages of 10 and 17 living in areas most affected by both HIV/AIDS and FGM. Participants will acquire comprehensive knowledge in all areas of sexuality, reproduction, health, partnership, the right to the physical integrity of one’s own body and the risks of FGM through innovative, playful and educational interventions. Additionally, 80 young people will be trained in the curriculum, who will act as multipliers to spread the project lessons further and beyond the project term.

PLAYING PROUD IN ST. LUCIA

Play Proud, a project launched with the aim of supporting the LGBTIQ+ community through positive coaching, embarked upon its first residency from 1st-5th April in St. Lucia. The first cohort of 22 coaches from 12 organisations based in 4 countries was trained in the methodology and will now return to their home communities with knowledge to make the football pitches where they train safe, inclusive and welcoming. The event was hosted by local organisation Sacred Sports Foundation. The Play Proud project spans 12 months and features two in-person residencies, the next held during Q3 in the United States. Stay tuned!

FOOTBALLS FOR ALL KICKS OFF IN COLOGNE

From 8th – 11th April, streetfootballworld will be gathering in Cologne with organisations from across Europe to kick off and chart the course of the 3-year football3 for all project. Together with RheinFlanke (Germany), ENSE (European Network of Sport Education), FARE (Football Against Racism Europe), Albion in the Community (UK), Balon Mundial (Italy), MSIS (Poland), Fotbal pro Rozvoj (Czech Republic), CAIS (Portugal) and Olatlom (Hungary), streetfootballworld will develop an organisational-level football certification as well as a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) that will allow individuals to access validated football3 education remotely and independently.

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We celebrate this day all over the world, understanding sport as all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction. These forms of physical activity include: play, recreation, organised, informal or competitive sports, and native sports and games.

In Latin America, while there is much to celebrate regarding sport’s contribution to social development, if we raise the magnifying glass to glance at persisting problems, it is with great sadness that we see how indicators of social inequality are worsening in Latin America.

Taking data from ECLAC in 2011, the evolution of child poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean reveals that in 17 Latin American countries 40.5% of children and adolescents (70.5 million) live in poverty and 16.3% in extreme poverty (28.3 million). One out of every six children is extremely poor in the region, while in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, a 19.5% of children are experiencing extreme poverty.

According to UNICEF, in Argentina 5.5 million children are living below the poverty line. 8.6% of Argentine children do not have access to food. If we focus on the situation more generally, the report reveals that 48% of Argentine children suffer at least one form of deprivation regarding their fundamental rights.

In Chile, UNICEF warns that 907,711 children and adolescents live in multidimensional poverty. The situation reflects one where the percentages of children and young people being violated of their rights are likewise high. While in Uruguay, UNICEF notes that poverty is concentrated in childhood and adolescence. 50% of people living in poverty are made up of families with children and adolescents, 48% of whom are under 18 years of age and continue to suffer encroachment in terms of exercising their rights. The situation is alarming.

In this context, talking about football, may seem like a luxury. The right to access sports and enable participation, in this context, is presented as a privilege. But let us pause for a moment to reflect. What is shown as a privilege, as a luxury, ‘the child’s right to play’, is actually an alternative to resolving conflicts. On the contrary, the right to sports, to be able to play football, for example, means accessing pillars of development and peace. Promoting opportunities for participation of all ethnic and social groups regardless of their gender, age, ability or culture in inclusive safe spaces, is the ideal means to raise awareness of peace processes, tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

From our experience we can affirm categorically that sport is an indispensable means to: raise awareness about clean and safe outdoor environments, improve our health and prevent diseases associated with poor diet and sedentary lifestyle. We also know of the potential of sport as an engine of economic development. On the other hand, as evidenced by Asociación Civil Andar’s Inclusive Football programme, sports development is related to school performance. The development of football proposals in Uruguay, as done by Gurises Unidos, and also Fútbol Más and Educere with its EDUGOL programme in Chile, has made it possible to work on the integral development of children and adolescents through football as a playful tool, fostering youth leadership as well as the empowerment and full exercise of their rights.

So, let’s go back to the beginning: what does it mean to celebrate the International Day of Sports for Development and Peace? In a context of increasing inequality and levels of social violence becoming unsustainable in some communities, celebrating sports for development and peace is a chance to engage with grassroots organisations providing relief. It is an opportunity to support social leaders from each neighbourhood and social project, have found a vehicle towards the construction of a more just society, with less violent ties and where the foundations can be laid for sustained and sustainable development. For all this, this 6th April, we will provide for all organisations that believe that another world is possible.
MEET THE 4 NEW MEMBERS OF THE STREETFOOTBALLWORLD NETWORK

1. **Kicken ohne Grenzen**
   - **Country:** Austria
   - **Main SDGs:** 3. Good Health and Well-Being; 4. Quality Education; 5. Gender Equality; 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth; 10. Reduced Inequalities
   - **Number of beneficiaries/year:** 120
   - **Age range of beneficiaries:** 8-25 years

   “Kicken ohne Grenzen” (“Football without Borders”) is an open football project for young people from disadvantaged communities. It allows young people to take part in regular, free training without any performance-related admission criteria, and later provides educational opportunities that make it easier to enter the school system or working life.

2. **THE GOAL**
   - **Country:** South Africa
   - **Main SDGs:** 3. Good Health and Well-Being; 4. Quality Education
   - **Number of beneficiaries/year:** 2000
   - **Age range of beneficiaries:** 10-18 years

   The Goal’s mission is to transform the lives of children and youth by providing safe spaces and educational programmes that promote character development, encourage literacy and healthy lifestyles, all through the game of football.

3. **SPIRIT OF FOOTBALL**
   - **Country:** Germany
   - **Main SDGs:** 4. Quality Education; 10. Reduced Inequalities
   - **Number of beneficiaries/year:** 8000
   - **Age range of beneficiaries:** 10-29 years

   Every four years Spirit of Football (SoF) undertakes global education journeys with a very special football ("The Ball") to the FIFA World Cup. The Ball is like football’s Olympic Torch. Self-form university seminars, holds football sessions with children and young people and carries out workshops so that trainers, educators and social workers can spread methods to their own clubs and communities. Underlying SoF’s work are six fair play principles: Everyone can play, Show respect, Teamwork, Honesty, Fair play and Have fun.

4. **RECLAIM CHILDHOOD**
   - **Country:** Jordan
   - **Main SDGs:** 3. Good Health and Well-Being; 5. Gender Equality
   - **Number of beneficiaries/year:** 400
   - **Age range of beneficiaries:** under 10-25 years

   Reclaim Childhood (RC) seeks to empower refugee and local girls and women in Jordan through sport and play. RC’s mission is threefold. First, to provide a safe space where participants can “Reclaim Childhood” and just be kids. Second, to connect communities that otherwise may not interact – refugees, Jordanians, and volunteers from all over the world. Third, to empower and inspire our young women by employing the positive impact of sport and play to teach the life lessons uniquely learned through athletes and by providing strong female role models as coaches.
Scotty’s first experience of armed conflict was in 1993, when he was driving humanitarian aid convoys through the Balkans that were embroiled in a bloody civil war. “During that time, I had been shot at, shelled, had experienced people laying anti-tank mines in the road,” he remembers. Having ventured into the line of fire without any prior military training, the assignment challenged him both physically and mentally. Nevertheless, he was drawn back to the region when, in 1996, he was hired by Arsenal in the Community to deliver a football coaching programme. He “hitched a lift” with an Edinburgh Direct aid convoy bound for Sarajevo.

One day, Scotty heard about a tragic event involving a group of young children. They had been playing football in a suburb of the Bosnian capital close to the front line, when the ball rolled into the undergrowth. The young players followed in hot pursuit not noticing a tripwire in their path. A fragmentation mine was set off, killing them all instantly.

Shaken by this incident, Scotty became determined to prevent it from being repeated. An idea formed in his head: he could turn the fact that children will play football even in the most hostile circumstances into an advantage. He would use the game to teach them important lessons about how to stay safe. “At the time there was no mine risk education,” Scotty explains, then ponders his response, adjusting his previous sentence to clarify: “Well, mine risk education was: guys in uniforms with guns showing kids defused weapons.”

Scotty marched to the nearest United Nations office and asked the staff to give him information about the weapons used in the conflict. With this knowledge, he began drawing up training sessions.

At the time, Sarajevo was a city with fresh wounds from an almost 4-year siege. The buildings were pockmarked from gun shells, there was no electricity, no running water, but the shooting had stopped. Scotty made his way to one of the football grounds where he would start training. He found it littered with landmines. It was an unfortunate but unsurprising episode for a Mine Risk Education programme. Scotty was unperturbed. “There are only solutions, there’s never a problem,” he says, an approach which he has maintained throughout his career. He found local experts to demine the pitch and resumed his plans.

Scotty began travelling around, visiting every football club he could locate and coaching daily. At the time, “peace was very fragile,” he remembers. Getting access to the different parts of the country was not easy, particular for a “Westerner”. It was football that granted him that access. Scotty began travelling around, visiting every football club he could locate and coaching daily. At the time, “peace was very fragile,” he remembers. Getting access to the different parts of the country was not easy, particular for a “Westerner”. It was football that granted him that access.

His personal life briefly took him to the United States, where he got married, but Scotty was soon to return to the region.
Having established ties with the US State Department's Office for Weapons Removal and Abatement, which delivers programmes and services to reduce the harmful effects of at-risk, illicitly proliferated, and indiscriminately used conventional weapons of war, he secured funding for a Mine Risk Education programme in Kosovo.

Scotty arrived in 1999, only two weeks after the fighting had ended. The situation there was completely different from what he had experienced previously in the region, Scotty recalls. When he had been in Bosnia, he had taken “calculated risks” bringing teams together under the umbrella of Spirit of Soccer. In Kosovo this wasn’t possible. In Mitrovica, the city in northern Kosovo where he was now working, he coached Kosovars in the morning, then crossed the bridge spanning the river Ibar and trained with two Serbian clubs in the afternoon. “I couldn’t tell the difference,” Scotty says. “You look like the people across the river,” he thought to himself. While both sides remained at a geographically supported distance, they welcomed him with equal measures of hospitality. “I would rock up, bring some footballs – so I was a bit of good news for them,” he reflects.

After Kosovo came a turning point in the development of Spirit of Soccer as an organisation. “The biggest evolution after Kosovo,” Scotty recalls. When he had been in Bosnia, he recalls, it then became possible to expand programmes in new places easily, he says that the local coaches are encouraged to adapt it and add a “regional flavour.”

When Scotty arrived in Cambodia in 2005, landmines and explosive remnants of war were killing around 1000 people each year. Spirit of Soccer began running Mine Risk Education programmes in Battambang and Kampong Chhnang provinces in cooperation with the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MOEYS), the Cambodian Football Federation (FFC) and the National Mine Action Agency (CMAC). Establishing these ties, as well as a regional office with local coaches helped to ensure that the programme would run long term. Gaining credibility by working with the communities in question and offering locals a livelihood is of great importance to Scotty. By gathering expertise in one country, Scotty says, it then became possible to expand further into the region. “Our coaches from Cambodia helped us set up in Laos,” Scotty says, explaining that, “Coaches from one region with similar cultures can see what someone else from further afield might miss.”

Mine Risk Education proved to be more than just a mission in itself. “It gave me the opportunity to develop grassroots football in war zones,” Scotty comments. “It gave me the opportunity for coaches’ education. I knew how valuable it is after two decades as an ‘A’ licensed instructor from two continents, to promote Coaches Education. These courses increased my learning power, increased my confidence, increased my standing. So, I’m like, ‘If it can do it for me, it’s going to do it for my coaches.’”

Not only observing the effects of the programmes, but how the coaches he has trained to deliver them flourish, is one of his greatest sources of motivation. “Seeing how proud they are of what they’re doing: Saving kids from weapons used in wars that they have experienced themselves,” Scotty says, his usual jovial tone becoming earnest, “What motivates me is my staff.”

At the behest of the US State Department, Scotty found himself on his next mission in 2007 to one of the most dangerous places in the world: Iraq. At the height of the insurgency, it proved a risky visit. “I spent five days of the two weeks under intensive shelling,” Scotty says. It took time and much perseverance to gain a foothold for Spirit of Soccer programmes in Iraq. Since their first launch in 2009, 300 coaches have been trained in Mine Risk Education reaching almost 300,000 children to date. Here, again, Scotty reports, the emphasis was on training locals and ensuring the coaches hailed from Arab, Sunni, Shia, Kurdish and Christian communities.

Due to the nature of the conflict in Iraq, Scotty recognised the need to expand his programmes. The conflict had not only left weapons and explosive devices in its wake, but a large number of young men with no occupation or purpose. “When you’ve got a lot of men with nothing to do, that equals danger and problems,” Scotty explains. Spirit of Soccer devised a football-based programme within the ‘Countering Violent Extremism’ (CVE) framework to provide these young men – so-called ‘fighting age males’ between the ages of 18 and 40 – with training opportunities and access to regular football activities. “It gives them something
to look forward to. Their lives are shit in the refugee camps where Daesh are recruiting every day. But if you can give someone a bit of hope, a bit of positivity, for them to unleash the bit of energy they’ve been holding in, through positive activity, exertion, exercise, it has a profound effect.” So far, 11,722 young men throughout Iraq have become part of the programme.

Most recently, in 2015, Scotty and his team began working in Colombia, a country scarred by decades of civil war. According to the Spirit of Soccer website, Colombia has “one of the highest incidences of child casualties from landmines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) in the world.” Not surprisingly, for many of these weapons directly targeted children with explosive devices planted in schools and even inside toys and footballs.

This, for Scotty, exemplifies the changing nature of conflict and warfare all over the world: soldiers have long ceased to be the only victims of war; civilians are an ever-more direct and intentional target. Commenting on civilian casualties dismissed as an unavoidable consequence of conflict, Scotty states emphatically: “There is no such thing as collateral damage,” adding with brutally clear words, “There are just dead people.”

The very nature of his work means challenges are predetermined from the outset. “You don’t lay mines in good places,” Scotty notes sardonically. “You’re not dealing with nice people all the time.” To be able to do his job, he says: “You’ve got to be flexible, the game plan always changes. I expect the best and plan for the worst.” He admits that he also finds the challenge fulfilling: “I enjoy getting through war zones without being armed. Just the ball and my team.”

What has helped him stay on track over the years? “Single-mindedness,” he replies without needing a moment to reflect. “I focus on two things: one, the development of football and two, making sure these kids stay alive. When you’re that single-minded, you don’t get distracted. Also, the continuing faith shown in us by the US Government. Too often in the Sport for Development and Peace sector, funders only give grants for a year here and six months there – this is a completely unsustainable approach and doesn’t help anybody. Having a partner who supported us for multiple years has allowed us to build trust, employ locals and scale our impact more effectively.”

Not erring from the path and staying focused is not always easy considering the circumstances of the work Spirit of Soccer does. “When you’re on the front line,” Scotty reflects, “you get close to people very quickly.” This, of course, also has its advantages: “You’re not fighting for a flag, you’re fighting for the person next to you. It creates very strong bonds.” As in football, overall success corresponds to the strength of the team.

Scotty notes the many parallels between football and war, not without a hint of sombre irony in his voice that many, in fact, aid his work. “The two things you’ve got to realise about football and war is they’re multi-billion dollar industries,” he begins, “And the other thing: they’re indiscriminate.” He pursues the thought further to proffer a comparison between football and landmines: “Football has no eyes, it doesn’t know what colour you are, it doesn’t see what gender you are, it doesn’t see what religion you are. And so is a mine. It doesn’t matter if you are a toddler or a ninety-year-old man and you step on an anti-personnel mine and have your legs blown off.” Scotty says, “I think that one of the reasons why Spirit of Soccer works so well is that both things that we are involved with – the mine and football – are indiscriminate.”

A very significant difference, of course, is that: “With football you get a second chance, with mines you don’t get a second chance.” So, is football the second chance for people living in the midst of conflict? Can football save the world? “No,” is Scotty’s laconic response. He rephrases the question: “Is football a tool that we can use to help us? – Yes.”

Using this tool, the Spirit of Soccer coaches reach some 100,000 children each year. “So, basically, I’ve got my own mob,” Scotty laughs. “But instead of picking up guns, we pick up footballs.”

Professional football meets football for good on the African Continent as Petra Landers, Former Player for the German Women's National Team, travels to Uganda and Zambia to support local organisations in improving football programmes for girls and young women.
Petra Landers, the 57-year-old football pioneer from Germany has a passion for sharing her football knowledge and experience with girls and women supporting equal playing opportunities for boys and girls anywhere in the world. “Football is close to my heart – it makes me proud and happy if I’m able to pass on my experience to the younger generation – to actually make them happy!”

This commitment also lead Petra to join the ‘Equal Playing Field’ initiative, and she became part of the two world record games played on Mount Kilimanjaro and at the Dead Sea by female international pros, competitive amateurs and graduates of sport charities to advocate for gender equality.

Germany is a leading example in women’s football and has one of the strongest professional sports structures in this field. But this wasn’t always the case. When Petra Landers was part of the German National Team that, in 1989, won the European Championship for the very first time, the amateur team was not entitled to receive any prize money. Instead, the German Football Federation (DFB) presented them with a floral coffee set.

Petra Landers knows what it means to play football in an environment that does not look favourably upon women kicking a ball around. She knows that girls often lack the same opportunities to be introduced to the game at an early age. She also understands the need for role models to show the way.

In Zambia and Uganda, female football is still at an early stage in its development. Both countries have a national team, but the local structures, especially in youth football, are not yet well established. As a consequence, the game very quickly becomes competitive, excluding those who are not striving towards a professional career, but would still love to play football.

Only four weeks after the phone call, Petra Landers is on a dusty football pitch in Lusaka, Zambia, surrounded by 25 young women, who are eagerly awaiting their first training session. 15 of them have no
experience in football whatsoever. These women were nominated by organisations from the street football network Zambia; most of them are streetfootballworld network members. The training in Lusaka was co-hosted by Grassroot Soccer and Bauleni Sports Academy. Since 2015, streetfootballworld has organised training workshops for female young leaders, supported by the sports promotion programme of the German Federal Foreign Office in collaboration with local hosts from the streetfootballworld network. This was the first edition on the African continent.

Following the week-long training workshop in Lusaka, Petra boarded a plane to Uganda, where she was hosted by Soccer Without Borders Uganda. In a camp near the river Nile, she repeated the training workshop. Again, about a third of the participants didn’t have any experience as a player or a coach. “My experience so far in Africa is that the women lack the foundation in football theory and practice. The women are very passionate and fight strong on the pitch, but you can quickly identify their weaknesses in technical aspects like passing and receiving,” Landers explains.

She was surprised to see that the groups in Zambia and Uganda were very similar: The beginners were eager to learn more about playing techniques and how to handle a ball. The more experienced players came to realise how much knowledge and expertise is behind a good football coaching session and what a difference it made to learn the tactics of the game. Petra’s “Basic” training applied to both needs. “The training of trainers seeks to create a multiplier effect. It provides a basis for the players to enjoy playing and to understand the game in its many aspects – technical drills and tactics is at the heart of the training as this is what the women often lack. On the other hand, they are already very experienced in or have good ideas how to recruit female players. To start a team, they were just lacking enough confidence – and this is what we can provide them with through the training."

Petra also emphasises the importance of role models: “I have learned from the participants that if the girls and also the parents see a female coach, there is more willingness to join a team.” The goal of this initiative is not to create the next professional team. Its main aim is to facilitate the development of structures in football that support girls to also join the game. It is in the area of expertise where professional football meets football for good. Although players’ development and a professional career are not the goals for the organisations operating in the field of football for good, football is at the heart of their work.

The ability to attract young people to social programmes requires the existence of high-quality football structures. Only a fraction of players is ever able to fulfill their own wish of becoming a professional player. For many, this is not even the ultimate goal – they simply enjoy playing the game. However, in many countries, both groups lack the structures to be able to do any of this, especially in women’s football. Football experts like Petra Landers have the chance to get the ball rolling. In an environment where no national team is coached by a woman and only few professional teams are, sending a woman as the football expert (not the “female football expert”) into the world, sets an example of how gender equality can be put into practice.

In Zambia, Petra was the Lead Coach with Mr. Kaluba Kangwa as her Assistant Coach – a rare sight in the field, but a perfect match for the training course where the trainers complemented each other’s knowledge and training expertise. In Uganda, former Ugandan professional Majidah
Nanatanda, another pioneer in women’s football, teamed up with Petra for the training. She was able to present the women in the course with experience from their own country.

In Zambia and Uganda, most trainers’ courses are expensive and restricted in access. Annet Naggujja, a coach from the Jean Sseninde Foundation in Uganda, who participated in the training course, mentioned that this was the first trainer course only for women that she had ever experienced. “You could discuss everything,” she explained, “and we speak one language – women’s football.” She also mentioned the lack of interest from the federation to invest in youth football, especially for girls. “If we would want to set up a league, we would have to do it by ourselves.” At the end of the course, she noted: “If I could make a wish, I would wish for a repeater after a year.”

This desire was echoed by Petra Landers: “I chose to conduct a “Basic Training” course as it is the most important module for players and future coaches. It creates the foundation. Without the basic knowledge, you can’t teach anybody to play football. You need to learn the techniques of how to pass, dribble, control and receive a ball, and how to prepare and organise a training session. But existing knowledge would be as needed to provide the young women with the opportunity to further improve their skills as a coach and player.”

To provide the newly trained coaches with the opportunity to put what they have learned into practice is the task of the organisations, who were selected to participate in the project. All of them are committed to improving opportunities for girls and women in their organisation to benefit from football. At Soccer Without Borders, for instance, the participants are now Assistant Coaches and will soon be able to lead their own teams.

“Thank you very much for empowering me as a coach. I promise I will do it as you taught me and I will empower younger ones through football!” Margaret Masumbe, participant from Zambia, told Petra Landers in parting. Botha Taoriga, another participant in Zambia, enthused that, “Petra has inspired me to realise that I have the ability to be a great coach.”

Reflecting on her engagement in the projects, Petra Landers concluded: “The recognition I have received makes me very proud and has fuelled my joy, strength and motivation to continue working on these projects. I would like to thank all of the participants, streetfootballworld and the German Football Ambassador.”

These programmes are testament to the power of what can be achieved when professional football and football for good work hand in hand. Expertise from the world of professional football can enable high-quality sports structures to be put in place in regions where they are lacking. Then, one day in the future, we will watch one of these young women lead a team to a World Cup in football as a team manager – whether for a women’s or men’s national team.
PLAYING FOR A LIFE WITHOUT LIMITS

I believe that everybody should be able to realise their potential. I believe that everybody should have access to the support that I did when growing up and through football I have the opportunity to be a part of that. As a senior leader or football coach, you are immediately a role model within the community. To me, that is a huge privilege and one that I will use to pass on the lessons I learned both through the game and my mum (my role model). To both, I owe so much. My name is Anelani Bungane and I’m 27 years old. I live in South Africa, a country so diverse and so exciting. I’m so proud to be from a place with so many different cultures. From Xhosa, to Zulu, to Afrikaan and Sotho, there are many different things that can influence who you are and what you will become. You cannot control where, or to whom you are born and, without support, it is very difficult at a young age to understand what can be positive or negative choices.

Though, growing up, my dad wasn’t around and it was just me and my mum, I had everything I needed. Life was so exciting with her. Sometimes she was a mum, sometimes a coach, a friend, everything in one. She always made sure I had everything I needed, bridging the gap between mother and father and everything in between. Not once did you ever hear me say “I miss my dad” or “I wish my dad was here”. In her, every need I had was always fulfilled. By the time I was 12 years old, she was already sick. We were living in Johannesburg but we had to move back to the Eastern Cape. She continued to work while I was studying, but things quickly got worse. I’ll never forget the day she died. I was at the field with my team. Somebody called my coach to tell him the news but before telling me he first told the players. Practice ended and the whole team put me in a taxi and took me home. I said, “Coach, what’s going on, why are you all coming with me?” Usually, I went home alone after football, as most of the other players were living in towns. I was the only one living outside. He said, “We just want to see where you live.” I got home and there were so many people there. I asked my coach again what’s going on. He told me: “Your mum is gone. That’s why we’re here.”

They didn’t want me to be alone that night. They gave me support when I needed it. They were by my side at the funeral and I will always be grateful for the amazing support they showed me. To show such care and love proved to me the meaning of a team. Having each other’s backs.

My mum brought me into this world not to be afraid and to be whatever I wanted. She encouraged me to do everything, whether it was studying, after-school activities, or football. “Don’t limit yourself,” she told me again and again. “Don’t limit yourself. Go and conquer the world” I’ll always remember that. It’s so funny, my colleagues say to
me: “Anelani, you are such a mummy’s boy,” because whenever I have the chance to talk about her, I always say, “I am what I am because of my mum.” What she taught me, I want to pass on to the kids who come through the door at Amandla. The opportunity to help kids who are not receiving the right amount of attention at home is such a big incentive. There is often a lack of parenting, a lack of fatherhood in their lives. There is no-one at home asking them: “How was school?” or “How was your day?” I was lucky in that I was asked: “How was school?” at home asking them: “How was school?” often a lacking of parenthood, a lacking of receiving the right amount of attention. The opportunity to help kids who are not who come through the door at Amandla. As well as hearing the accounts of Austin Grounds alumni from the past 20 years, praising the effects of the pitch on their own lives, we follow the next generation of Mathare children revelling in an all too rare glimpse of space.

“Don’t limit yourself,” she told me again and again. “Don’t limit yourself. Go and conquer the world!” I’ll always remember that.

When kids come into the Safe-Hub in Khayelitsha, they find out very quickly, through the senior leaders and myself as a Fair Play Manager, they have people that really care about them and want to help, people who care about their dreams and want to motivate them in whatever it is that they want. We work with children coming from all different types of backgrounds. Being able to help them realise their potential, and understand their world and to share your own, is really amazing. Many people in South Africa believe that education should be the thing that motivates their children. But, even now, I can’t imagine studying hard every single day without the hope that later I could go to the field and play. I tell my colleagues, what we do here, is amazing, and that piece of paper with a statement on at the end of the month doesn’t matter. The work we do, the job itself, is incentive enough.

People ask me: “Why are you always smiling? Is this smile real?” and I just have to laugh. I’m telling you, it’s real! I know there will be ups and downs, the most important thing is to keep a positive attitude. The one message I want the kids to take from me, is the belief that they can be what they want to be. If you have the belief, or even the thought that you can do something, then you can. Don’t limit yourself.

“Don’t limit yourself,” she told me again and again. “Don’t limit yourself. Go and conquer the world!” I’ll always remember that.

From the 21st - 25th of March Berlin’s Babylon cinema swapped red carpets for green turf for the 16th instalment of the 11mm International Football Film Festival. Gracing the big screen with worldwide premieres were two documentaries featuring the work of streetfootballworld network members and the power of football for good.

BABA YAO

Sebastian Gil Miranda’s Baba Yao traces the incredible origins of a football pitch formed amongst the rubble of Nairobi slum, Mathare, and its redeeming effect upon its local community. By trade a photographer, Miranda’s film journeys through the narrow alleyways of corrugated metal to transport his audience directly into the epicentre of Mathare Life. Through his assemblage of moving photographs we explore the seeds of a story planted by Austin Ajowie that took Fruit thanks to one man’s tireless efforts and his collaboration with the organisation Fútbol Más.

Cut short by injury, the former goalkeeper channelled his career’s premature end by transforming a former dumping site into the beating heart of his neighbourhood. Day after day, despite people continually disposing their waste, he persisted in clearing the mountain of rubbish to create what slowly became known as the Austin Grounds. As well as hearing the accounts of Austin Grounds alumni from the past 20 years, praising the effects of the pitch on their own lives, we follow the next generation of Mathare children revelling in an all too rare glimpse of space.

STREETKIDS UNITED 3 – THE ROAD TO MOSCOW

Jaja Films have once again teamed up with Street Child United to create the third edition of the Streetkids United series. Directed by Jaco Groen and Jamilah Van der Huijst, Streetkids United 3 – The Road to Moscow brings us to the streets of Chennai, India, to meet nine young girls on their journey representing Team India at the Street Child World Cup 2018 in Moscow. As harrowing tales of sexual assault and family abandonment emerge, more so do the courageous attitudes of the young women. Through a self-narrated account, the story illuminates the transformative power of football and reflects its ability to humanise and provide a voice to those whose plight too often falls on deaf ears. We play witness to Team India’s journey across the world to Russia, so enduring in the joy it brings to the young women, but likewise providing multiple moments of laughter surrounding their critique of Russian cuisine. As we grow increasingly attached to Team India, the campaign itself eventually ends with early defeat. Yet, in spite of our emotional investment, the result by no means comes in vain, as the work of Karuralaga Social Service Society and Street Child United shine through in a hugely uplifting film, that is a joy to watch.
Sarah Fong is a 32-year-old PhD student at the University of Southern California. Interested in learning more about football and the culture surrounding it, she booked a trip with the third half to Colombia. This is her account of the journey that allowed her to discover the history and culture of the country through the lens of football.

OFF THE BEATEN TOURIST TRACK
AND ONTO THE PITCH

DISCOVERING COLOMBIA THROUGH FOOTBALL WITH THE THIRD HALF
Like many people from the United States, I am new to the world of soccer. But, I have been a sports fan all my life. As a young girl, my father would take my two sisters and I to baseball games, American football games, and basketball games at the university near our home. I can remember the excitement of walking into the stadium as a little girl. I was always proud to wear the team’s logo and thrilled by the buzz of the crowd. Looking back on my early memories of attending games with my parents and sisters, I see that for me, being a sports fan has always been about connecting with others. It has always been about celebrating the wins and lamenting the losses together; it has always been about hoping that this time, our team would make it to the top.

In addition to cultivating our love of sports, my parents instilled in my sisters and I a belief in the importance of service to others. They encouraged us to volunteer at local schools and community organisations. They taught us that we all have a responsibility to leave the world a better place than we found it. The combination of my love of sports and the desire to advance social change prompted me to visit Colombia in 2018 on a trip organised by my fiancée (who is an avid Manchester City fan) has introduced me more and more to the world of soccer. From his stories and experiences, I knew that there would be excitement and energy around the games. I also knew that the third half and Black Arrow would show us elements of Colombian history and culture that went beyond the typical tourist experience. I hoped that in the week we spent traveling around the country, I would learn something about how soccer fits into the culture and rhythms of life in Colombia. I hoped to see how the soccer could be an engine of social transformation.

Our group travelled around the country for just over a week. We watched World Cup games with local fans in Cartagena; spent a day with Tiempo de Juego in Santa Marta; visited a coffee farm in Minca; travelled to San Basilio de Palenque; and relaxed at the beach on Isla de Pirata. Soccer tied together our experiences in each of these places. In Cartagena and Isla de Pirata, we watched the World Cup matches with local fans. We practiced skills and played a match with the youth at Tiempo de Juego. In San Basilio de Palenque and at the beach in Tayrona, we kicked a ball around with local residents. In each place we visited, it was clear that soccer is a central part of community life throughout Colombia.

“In each place we visited, it was clear that soccer is a central part of community life throughout Colombia.”

A week is only enough time to scratch the surface of Colombia’s culture and history. What became clear to me on this trip, however, was the power of soccer to bring people together. As our group walked down the streets of Cartagena, supporters wearing the national team’s kits called out to one another. In the bars and restaurants where we watched World Cup matches, strangers cheered, hugged, and celebrated together. As we traveled from city to city, we passed countless pitches where matches and practices were taking place – sometimes they looked like formal teams wearing matching kits and other times we saw handfuls of people simply kicking a ball around. As visitors from another country, some of our group spoke Spanish and some did not. But when it came to watching the World Cup or joining the matches we encountered along the way, language did not seem to matter so much. The game itself provided a way for us to communicate across the divides of language, country, and culture. We all shared a love of sport, competition, and the feeling of being part of a team, part of something larger than ourselves. On this trip to Colombia, I learned how soccer can create new possibilities for relationships amongst diverse peoples.

I was particularly struck by the work that Tiempo de Juego does in Santa Marta. Tiempo de Juego uses football as a tool for youth development, teaching away the need for a national language to bring people together. As young people how to become agents of change in their own communities. The young people met there were confident in their soccer skills, welcoming and showed they had learned the power of soccer to connect people from around the world to work towards common goals. As supporters and players share experiences – playing, winning, and losing together – they create bonds and learn lessons that can be used to create a more just and equitable world.

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EQUALITY IS EVERYONE’S GAME

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