

# My Journey from Mohali to St. Petersburg

Powerful Lessons and Insights

Ananya Kamboj



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*The book is dedicated to my grandmother, Saroj Kamboj and my grandfather, Late Nanak Chand Kamboj. Special thanks to my parents Vikram Kamboj and Pooja Kamboj, to my sister Aahana Kamboj and to my chachus Deepak Kamboj and Navneet Kamboj.*

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# Foreword

I couldn't have been happier after knowing that my little student Ananya, whom I taught when she was just 8 years old, is now a budding writer!

At just 13 years of age, Ananya is ready to set an example for all the young minds. From being outstanding at academics to representing your country at Football for Friendship programme organized by Gazprom and FIFA and now becoming a writer, Ananya is an inspiration in herself.

You, dear reader, are in for a treat! The book is short and reminiscent. You are definitely going to feel inspired and amazed about how young minds are growing into such learned beings.

Mrs. Nikita Sharma Sehgal





# Preface

Dear Reader,

How did the idea to write *My Journey from Mohali to St. Petersburg* occur? The day I returned to Mohali after attending the Football for Friendship (F4F) social programme in Russia, I was encouraged by my father to write my memoirs.

Have you ever wondered why it is important to have values in life? What makes these values so special to us? If you are looking at famous sports professionals, don't look at the records they break or the games they win; instead, try to learn some valuable lessons from their approach and their lives too.

The more time I spend researching the successes of young ambassadors from the F4F social programme, the more I realize what traits they all have in common: they started at a very young age, they loved what they did, they were determined in pursuing success and most of them had great support from people surrounding them.

## P r e f a c e

I'm excited to welcome you to *My Journey from Mohali to St. Petersburg* and proud to share the life lessons and values I have learnt from this journey.

Happy reading!

Ananya Kamboj

# Acknowledgements

A special thanks to the entire team of Football for Friendship.

I am grateful to my parents Vikram Kamboj and Pooja Kamboj, my grandmother Saroj Kamboj, my chachus Deepak Kamboj and Navneet Kamboj and my sister Aahana Kamboj for believing in me and supporting this dream of mine.

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## CHAPTER 1

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# The Journey Begins

It all started on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 when a poster of FIFA U17 World Cup India 2017 caught my eye on a visit to a Bank of Baroda branch in my neighbourhood. The poster was about a 'Contest for Young Journalists' encouraging students to report on Gazprom's Football for Friendship Championship in Russia. The applicant was to write a cohesive and inspiring story on football in about 200 words, and the last date to submit the essay was 25<sup>th</sup> April 2017. The contest was organized by Mission XI Million (MXIM), an initiative spearheaded by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and All India Football Federation (AIFF) and supported by the Government of India.

It was the first time when a cricket-crazy country of 1.3 billion such as India was going to play in for the FIFA World Cup at any level of football. The anticipation was high as the host nation.

A month before this, I had the privilege to meet Mr. Gurmangal Dass Soni, the Founder of the Youth Football Club (YFC) Rurka Kalan at Lake Club, Chandigarh. For those who are not aware, Soni is involved in a global campaign to stem out the increasing use of drugs among the youth in Rurka Kalan and surrounding areas and to provide better livelihood opportunities to underprivileged children and the youth.

I found Mr. Soni's story fascinating and inspiring. He does not look like a big film star, but in real life, he is playing an even bigger role in taking Punjab from darkness to light, one village at a time. He is an ordinary person who has done extraordinary things.

However, when all the eyes of the world are on India, the occasion is worth participating in I think, and even celebrating. Finally, I decided to pen down his inspiring story for the contest and submitted it just minutes before the deadline closed.

I vividly remember the day I got a response as I had a happening night in my plans.

I was stunned...

I was completely surprised when I got an email letting me know that I had won the 'Young Journalist' contest. My goal was only to participate and try my luck. I couldn't believe that I had won the contest and would be among sixty-four other young reporters



heading to St. Petersburg, Russia under a social programme sponsored by FIFA and Gazprom.

I am thankful to God for this gift of my life. A lot has happened since then. As I was preparing myself for this big event, I had the privilege of meeting an amazing and talented man, Mr. Ranjit Bajaj, the owner, founder and executive director of Minerva Punjab Football Club (MPFC). He loves the game and has tremendous enthusiasm, patriotism, dedication, professionalism and passion for football. Seeing my achievement, his academy provided leadership and motivational training free of cost and encouraged me to do well at every step of the F4F initiative.

Motivational sessions were fun and energizing. They created a platform for teamwork and team spirit that increased my confidence level and encouragement to excel. That was the best training I had participated in throughout my school life and I tried hard to put into practice the leadership concepts of the course. One of the most important things that I learnt from this training is to lead myself, which helped me to lead others better.

Recently, one of the leading newspapers *The Times of India* published my interview. I want to share it here as well as an inspiration to the new students and competitors and provide an inside look at my post-trip life. Hope you will enjoy it.

# Friendship over Football

Ananya Kamboj, a class VIII student of Vivek High School, Mohali, was a part of the prestigious Football for Friendship programme 2017, in St Petersburg, Russia. She shares her experience as a student journalist from India...

By Anne Chertan

**What key points did you keep in mind as a representative of Football for Friendship" (F4F) programme?**

Representing my country at an event that was being attended by more than 1,000 guests from 64 countries all over the world, was an honour. I conducted myself in a way that upheld the sovereignty and integrity of India and at the same time showed respect and gratitude to the visiting country, Russia.

**How did you get an opportunity to become a part of this programme?**

I was shortlisted as the 'Football for Friendship young journalist from India' after participating in a contest conducted by F4F, supported by Mission XI Million programme of the FIFA U-17 World Cup India 2017. The contest saw entries from over 20 cities. My winning entry spoke of the role of football in 'Enabling Conversations', which could help soothe tensions and foster engagement between countries and people across the globe.

**Football for Friendship (F4F) was primarily a sporting event, so what was your area of responsibility as a student journalist?**

My work was to apprise the children about the nine values (friendship, equality, fairness, health, peace, devotion, victory, traditions, and honour) and how important it is to follow them. I also took part in the coverage of the activities of the F4F as part of the International Children's Press Center. Whole group of journalists and footballers were divided into eight teams and I conducted interviews of the players from other teams and reported key events, which were printed in the F4F Newsletter, besides anchoring Football for Friendship video digest.



**YOUNG ACHIEVERS**

## ABOUT THE EVENT

F4F or Football for Friendship is a social project organised by Gazprom which uses the global love of football to promote humanitarian values and bring together young people (boys & girls aged 12-14 yrs, from different cultures around the world. India made its debut in the fifth edition of F4F 2017.

**How was your interaction with the foreign counterparts?**

My fellow counterparts from foreign countries were not that different in basic things; they were friendly, supportive and were keen to know more about India and its traditions. The only major difference was the language barrier as a few young ambassadors were from the non-English speaking countries, so I had to communicate with them through translators.

**Any challenges you faced during your stay and how did you overcome it?**

It was a well-organised programme and there were hostesses to help us at every step. I am glad to have got the opportunity to be a part of the programme and experience firsthand how a media center works.

The journey has brought about a positive transformation, instilling in me the confidence to address a crowd of over 1000 people, as one of the keynote speakers of the programme.

**Did you get a chance to meet famous footballers?**

I got a chance to meet Dmitri Sennikov, famous Russian footballer. Also met Olympic and Paralympic champions, FIFA legends, FIFA top management and the members of the Russian Olympic Committee.

**How did your school support you in this endeavour?**

I got full support and encouragement from my school. I want to thank my class teacher and sports teacher Vishal Sharma for encouraging me at every step.

**What's next? How do you plan to utilise the exposure you've got from F4F programme?**

I want to pursue journalism as a career. I have received offers from leading universities (India, USA, Singapore and UK) to join their short-term courses. I also plan to share my experiences with budding student reporters through a book that I'll be penning down soon. My journey from Mohali to St Petersburg.

## WHAT HAS BEING A PART OF THE F4F PROGRAMME TAUGHT YOU?

The F4F programme taught me how to understand each other better and the ability to find a common language, despite any differences, is a guaranteed route to success for team sports, business and as a way of living.

## My Winning Piece

Below is my winning piece, *Youth Football Club Rurka Kalan: Breaking Barriers*. It was quite emotional and, at the same time, it was incredible to get the opportunity to represent India at the F4F Championship in Russia.

Ananya Kamboj India

### YOUTH FOOTBALL CLUB RURKA KALAN: BREAKING BARRIERS



Football is a game loved by millions and rules the hearts of people from all parts of the world. Compared to other games the popularity is much larger.

There are many diehard fans who literally live and breathe this game, and the list of such fans include some top celebrities, sportsmen and ordinary people, as football fanatics are spread all across the world, the game of football is actually a great source of uniting the world and bringing peace.

This is a story of how one man with one dream stepped out to take charge and fought against the tide till he achieved his goal.

Gurmangal Dass Sony hailing from Punjab

was just one of the many being troubled by the rising nuisance of wasted human capital in the form of drug addicts among an entire generation. Later, he decided to start a revolution against it.

With the investments he had, Dass continued his efforts and gathered youth, both girls and boys and encouraged them to play football, even for few hours.

As time went on, the players started understanding more and more rules of the games and most of all, started enjoying it. They were looking forward to the sessions with the coaches, where they could learn more and improve their football skills.

Kids became more disciplined, loitered less. They didn't have any time and desire to use drugs. They had a purpose and a goal: the goal to get better at something. Children had an opportunity not only to spend time in a more sociable environment, but could also look forward to increasing their chances at becoming professional sportsmen under the guidance of their coaches.

Children learnt about fair play in sports that requires full honesty, loyalty, tolerance, mutual support for fellow players, and self-control. Apart from teaching football, the other main motive of Gurmangal's mission is to promote friendship amongst the youngsters.



The game of football is considered as a perfect blend of different workouts, right from running and jogging to aerobics, continuous moment improves the stamina of players and pushes them towards a healthy lifestyle.

The club has continued to stand among the top 3 in the last few years in the Punjab State School Football Championship. They were also able to secure the first position in the Street Child World Cup Soccer Tournament held in South Africa. They came up as runners-up in the Manchester United Premier Cup in Gurgaon in the year 2011.

Now YFC Rurka Kalan is spread over five different villages in the state of Punjab and is working towards changing the destinies of thousands of children and youth over the region, for the betterment of the society.



## My Journey from Mohali to St. Petersburg



I, Ananya Kamboj, am a ninth grader at Vivek High School, Mohali. Being a part of the Drama and Speech programme, Trinity College London for four years, football along with creative writing has empowered me and given me a platform to express myself. I used to have a quick temper and was prone to losing control when angry. I learnt that losing my emotions can cost not only me but my team as well.

The shy girl from the classroom can now stand up to the playground bullies, actively take care of her teammates and her writing interest. For these reasons and considerable technical skills, such as controlling, juggling, running, dribbling, shooting and passing the ball and imagination, I was selected for the F4F programme in St. Petersburg, Russia.

F4F is an international children's social programme that aims to promote youth sports and foster tolerance and respect towards other cultures and ethnicities. In its 5th year, young journalists from sixty-four countries participated in F4F, which was backed by FIFA and Gazprom. In 2017, India was invited for the first time.

Mohali to Delhi, Delhi to Dubai and finally Dubai to St. Petersburg – twenty-three hours later, we arrived at the Pulkovo International Airport, St. Petersburg. At twelve degrees temperature on a rainy day, the F4F team welcomed us and informed us it was summer! I looked around nervously, not sure where I

had landed up. The warm, cramped streets of Mohali were left far behind.

At the first ambassador meet, I was introduced to my team, consisting of 12-year-olds from Armenia, Venezuela, Iceland, Pakistan, Slovenia, South Africa and South Korea. I was nervous and not sure how to behave, overwhelmed by everything that was coming my way. Some of these kids had blond hair and most of them had iPhones, but I tried my best to put myself out there. My efforts wouldn't go in vain.

We were informed that over the next three days, my team and I would be a part of the International Friendship Camp. The bus would leave after breakfast to the Nova Arena, where the eight teams of friendship would immerse themselves in football, values, team building and friendship.

I was in the Yellow team. On the first day, we stepped out into the extreme rain and wind on another cold morning with my notepad and camera. I had been waiting for this moment. Through the myriad of emotions and questions in my head, I entered the football pitch.

I was struggling to move freely in the blistering cold, but I clicked pictures of the drills my teammates were participating in and of the goalkeeper saving goals and started building the bonds that only a sport can bring. Within two hours of football, I had settled in.

After lunch, my team learnt about the core values of the F4F Programme – friendship, equality, fairness, health, peace, devotion, victory, traditions and honour. Every day, my team leaders Diana and Alena would focus on three values. We learnt through indoor games, team activities, discussions and with a lot of laughter.

Here, I got to interact with my teammates and all the other participants. Within the first hour, I started joking with them, playing Score Hero and even giving Diana and Alena a hard time. I saw something that was very apparent about everyone around: we were from different countries, different backgrounds and different cultures, yet we all bonded really well. We filled the bus and rode back with laughter, chants and high-fives.

As the third day came to an end, I was feeling part of a bigger identity – the Yellow team. We had invented names for each other; we were constantly pulling pranks on each other and laughing uncontrollably. We shared stories of our countries, of our football and our favourite players. On the field, we were forming a solid understanding of each other, and I was pushing myself with every dive, every block, every goal and every write-up.

I was part of a team, and we had started to feel united. The young ambassadors I had met on the first day from all those different countries were now Sujal Sandeep Kahar, Viktor Rivin Ottarsson, Jaka Bahor,

Mohammad Yusuf Moazzam, Jaemin Lee, Adam Olivier, Carlos Raul Aguilar, Edgar Aslanyan and coach Bogdan Krolevetsky. The Friendship Camp ended and the kids were given a day off, which included a tour of the historic city of St. Petersburg. The buses, escorted by the police, took us all across the city with a tour guide who gave us insights about the city.

We learnt that the Peter and Paul Fortress was used to imprison and execute people during the revolution. The Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood was probably the most iconic cathedral in Russia. I saw a new world, which seemed almost picked from imagination. Pictures, souvenirs shopping, pizza eating and posing with Porsches filled the day in between visiting monuments and enjoying scenic views.





Saturday marked the big day we had been camping for, the F4F Championship. After a grand, entertaining opening ceremony, we, the Yellow team, played the quarterfinal against the Cyan team and came out 2-0 winners. Our captain, Viktor, from Iceland performed exceptionally well. My team's goalkeeper, Sujal, made a crucial save at 1-0, one-on-one against an attacker. He was wheeled around in celebration after the final whistle. All those days of practice and anticipation were worth it. I was beaming from ear to ear.

The semi-final was against the Orange team. The match that began with three quick goals to Orange, eventually becoming 3-2 and finally 4-3 to Orange. Sports teaches us to take both defeat and victory. We eventually shook off our understandable disappointment. The Orange team went on to win the championship, ending the day in a downpour of confetti and music. It was time for all of us to celebrate, with a big day planned for Sunday.

The final day began at the International Children's Forum. Football superstars like Julio Baptista and Michel Salgado were present, along with FIFA Secretaries, media from across the globe and an audience of around 1,200 people.

I contributed five articles, including a poem, for the daily F4F Newsletter and also anchored the Football for Friendship video digest. I was invited to speak at the event. This journey brought about a positive transformation, instilling confidence in me – the

confidence to address a crowd of over 1,200 people as one of the keynote speakers of the programme. I kept the Indian flag flying high at the F4F Social Programme at St. Petersburg! It was a moment of sheer pride for everyone associated with F4F. It was a fitting testament to the beautiful game and a representation of the impact it had on me.

We ended the day with a visit to the New Zenit Stadium for the Confederations Cup Final, Germany vs. Chile. Here, we got to see two of the best teams in the world battle it out live in front of us. The players we had watched on TV were now up close.

I paid close attention to both goalkeepers and thought that Ter Stegen from Germany was the better one. 56,000 people made for an electric atmosphere, many Mexican waves and a lot of cheering. It was a dream come true for everyone.

Exhausted, I woke up late the next day, packed my bags and said goodbye as everyone left for the airport and their homes.

I made a list of everyone's numbers and Facebook names, and I promised to share videos and games with each other.

The awkward handshakes from the first day were now hugs and wide smiles. Football had built friendships and a tale we would tell our grandkids. With a whole bag of chocolates, gifts and memorabilia,

I said bye to St. Petersburg, waiting for my mother's *daal* and rice at home (Russian food too bland for me).

How this experience would shape my personality and self-confidence is something that I will see over time. For now, I was given a chance to be a part of something larger than life. I came back to my regular life with countless memories, stories and new friends.

Football took me to a city I didn't even know existed until then. It taught me that peace and humanity are not just words in a book. The relationship between India and Pakistan has been standing at possibly its lowest ebb for almost a decade but programmes like F4F can play an important part in bringing people closer. I watched, played and became friends with a boy and his family from Pakistan, despite everything that my TV in Mohali says. For me, football is more than a game. It is a way of life, a mirror through which one can see the ebbs and flows of our world, capturing our joyous moments and our very sad ones. The game's true beauty lies in its long reach, from east to west and north to south.

There are so many great lessons that I had learnt from this journey. I made a list of some of the most important ones so far, lessons that had a great impact on my life. These lessons have helped me become the person I am today.



## CHAPTER 2

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# Teaching Values via Sports

Sports are one of the best things to teach the beauty of life along with important values and discipline to children.

Every child dreams about their future, but only a few of them seriously want to pursue their career in sports. Among all sports, football is one of the most popular ones among the youth. To make sure that every child across the world gets the required facilities along with the needed knowledge about football, FIFA took the initiative along with Gazprom and launched the F4F social programme in 2013.

At first, eight countries participated in this project. Every year the count was doubled, and in 2017, the number increased to sixty-four. The programme is supported by many big associations and federations of different countries. Apart from teaching football, the

other main motive of this mission is to promote friendship among the youth of different nations.

The Football for Friendship forum also organizes many other festivals and activities. The forum focuses on teaching children the value of teamwork, respect for other ethics and religions, appreciation for the differences and the value of respecting one's peers in every possible way.

The F4F forum is focused on inculcating nine basic values to today's youth via football, i.e. equality, fair play, friendship, tradition, commitment, healthy lifestyle, peace, victory and devotion.

These values are important for everyone's life. Football is a great platform to teach such values to children. Children learn equality, devotion and victory with continuous teamwork. They understand the beauty of diversity by playing with teammates from different backgrounds and learn to respect their traditions with time. Football is considered a perfect blend of different workouts, right from running and jogging to aerobics; continuous movement improves the stamina of players and pushes them towards a more disciplined lifestyle.

The forum introduced a special award 'The Nine Values Cup' in 2015. To win this cup, football clubs need to show their true commitment towards the nine values of Football for Friendship social programme. Their performances are then evaluated by different campaigns, social initiatives and other activities taken

for the betterment of children who participate. This award is unique as the children who participate in the F4F programme decide the winner of the 'Nine Values Cup'.





## CHAPTER 3

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# Fostering Friendship and Peace

Football is a game loved by millions and rules the heart of people from all parts of the world. As compared to other games, its popularity is way more. Many die-hard fans live and breathe this game including many top celebrities, sportspersons and politicians. As football fanatics are spread all over the world, the game of football is a great way to unite the world. Anyone from any part of the world can have a brief conversation about a game they love. No matter which sector, country or region you belong to, if you're interested in a football match, you can talk for hours which definitely forms a different bond.

In recent times, people from all across the world have witnessed many wars and they are genuinely fed-up of conflicts among nations. Wars increase tension among people and the nation as a whole. Wars divide people.

At such a time, when most of the countries are having conflicts over one or many issues with one another, a game like football can give hope to brighten the relations between countries. No one can solve differences and conflicts easily, but giving a common ground to speak, to discuss can be more than enough to foster peace among one another. It can unite people by creating dialogues and creating positive changes and understanding among societies.

Over the years, sports have been used as an important way to establish peace between countries and communities. The history of football is filled with many such tournaments, where initiatives have been taken to improve sour relationships among different regions and countries. For instance, in the FIFA World Cup of 1998 held in France, a match was played between Iran and USA. The match was attended by the political leaders of both the countries.

Fans from across the world are happy as many initiatives have been taken by different groups, clubs and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) to spread peace and prosperity by organizing several football tournaments across the border.





# Promoting Equality Among All

Sports has a huge potential to empower women. In many countries, it has been recognized to amplify women's voice and tear down gender barriers and discrimination. Sports helps women to challenge the misunderstanding of them being weak or incapable. Every time they clear a hurdle or kick a ball, they demonstrate not only physical strength but also leadership and strategic thinking. They take a step towards gender equality.

The equality parameter of F4F focuses on recognizing girls in the football game or other sports events and encourages them to participate actively. It aims to provide women-friendly sports provisions so that they have maximum access to football without any fear.

F4F is good evidence that participation in sports can help break down gender stereotypes, improve

girls' self-esteem and contribute to the development of leadership skills.

Football also plays a crucial role in social bonding. It fortifies the culture of equality among all. The F4F forum wishes that schools and universities should promote 'football for all' and work towards reducing the dropouts from sports with the help of sports organizations. It aims to monitor the football fields closely to reduce discrimination based on player's disability, race, culture, age, religion, sexuality or gender and empower national or international bodies to take legal actions against discrimination. It has now become essential to develop an integrated system to allow football to overcome all cultural, social and other barriers.

- More initiatives are being taken to include disabled persons in sports activities to give them publicity through all types of media.
- Schools need to encourage them by organizing sports sessions. Small schools that do not have proper infrastructure for football and other sports are being equipped with resources by the school sports federations.
- Immigrants are being encouraged and helped to participate in sports events by making all kinds of facilities available to them.
- Sports clubs are being established in rural and underdeveloped areas with all kinds of affordable services regarding football.

- Football coaches are being trained and educated to respect and educate their pupils about democracy and equality as their duties.

Research has shown that in football, many national teams have a diverse set of players, while in many other sports, minorities are under-represented. Therefore, football is essential for welcoming social bonding, integration, unity and equality among all.





# Let's Promote Fairness

Fair play is a complex concept that comprises and embodies some fundamental values that are not only integral to sports but relevant in everyday life too.

Fair competition, respect, friendship, team spirit, equality, sports without doping and respect for written and unwritten rules such as integrity, solidarity, tolerance, care, excellence and joy are the building blocks of fair play that can be experienced and learnt both on and off the field.

To enjoy the fruits of success, it is not enough to win. Triumph must be measured by absolute fair means, honesty and fair play. Train hard and play as professionals to achieve success. Play to the whistle at all times and adhere to the rules. Unwarranted play should never be condoned. Play the game with the right spirit so everyone can enjoy.

## **How Football Promotes Fairness**

Fairness means giving an impartial and equal opportunity to every player. It involves values like human ethics, sports ethics, respect for competitors, equal conditions and so on.

The vital aims of the F4F forum are mentioned below:

- F4F aims to teach children and youth the importance of fair play in sports. The forum wants to spread awareness about honesty, loyalty, tolerance, mutual support for fellow players, and self-control and no use of drugs in sports.
- F4F aims to make the playing field at such a level that every player competes with players of the same potential and following the same rules. This is known as 'level playing field'. For example, disabled persons need a field where they can compete with people in their category. This would be called fairness.
- It aims to include all types of participants in the game, irrespective of their body strength, natural skill or coaching environment.
- Another important aim is to ensure that even the team which is defeated is given something which serves as a symbol of appreciation for its hard work and efforts.

- F4F aims to weaken the importance of victory or defeat in the minds of children and youth, teaching them participation, enjoyment and teamwork on the field.
- Sports require honesty and fair play from judges too. Therefore, F4F has initiated to create a sporting environment, which does not encourage cheating, violence or other unfair practices.
- The main objective of F4F is to create a sporting environment to help children and youth become athletes and committed citizens.
- Teaching children fairness is one of the important lessons. Since fair play in sports involves no bending of rules, it helps children solve problems in their personal life too with an honest fight.
- Football and other sports instil ethical and moral values among children and youth. They promote self-respect and team spirit among them.

Equity in sports is about the attitude of a player and a judge and not just the rules of a game. Football requires fair play which can teach the players respect and tolerance both in the field and in their lives. It gives hope for uniting cultures, regions and someday nations too.



# Football for Friendship and its Health Benefits

From pickup games in a driveway or backyard, to recreational leagues and all the way up to highly competitive leagues at school and professional levels, millions of children play sports every year. Each athlete has his own reason for playing a sport, be it for competition, socializing with other people or the glory he or she finds on the playing field. Another factor that drives many athletes is the effect on their health from playing sports.

Football fans are spread across the world. This game is played in different parts of the world in regional, national and international leagues. Apart from its popularity, the game has a lot of health benefits too. Much research in recent times has shown that playing football on a regular basis or in an

interval of a week or 15 days is more beneficial than going to the gym, running or weightlifting.

Due to increasingly sedentary lifestyles, health issues have increased and society as a whole is suffering from many health issues. As the rate of obesity is constantly rising, it has become important for every individual to add some sort of activeness in their daily routine to stay fit. Adding games like soccer in your routine can help in maintaining fitness, strength and endurance. People of all ages and skills can play this game easily.

Many clubs and foundations are taking initiatives to make this game or other sports popular among kids to help them develop a healthy way of life. The F4F initiative by FIFA and Gazprom is focused on promoting football among kids of all ages across the world. As the game has a lot of physical and mental health benefits, it helps in kids' growth in enormous ways.

The rules of the game are quite easy, so it's easy for beginners to get well versed with the game. A game of football teaches coordination and promotes teamwork, self-discipline and concentration. It also teaches an effective way of stress handling, reduces anxiety and increases self-esteem and confidence among kids. As the game teaches 'think on the run', it also improves the decision-making skills in kids.

Soccer improves cardiovascular health along with aerobic capacity. It helps to tone muscle and lowers

body fat. Regular football players can notice tremendous changes in their body strength, endurance and flexibility. Football is more beneficial than common exercises like running, jogging, weightlifting, cardio or aerobics because the game itself is a complete package of all the exercises. A game of football makes you run, walk and constantly jog, which helps in developing stamina. Players need to jump and constantly leap during the game, which makes them more active.

The game centres on stamina and endurance. Apart from other physical and mental health benefits, football helps in reducing weight, regularizing blood pressure and lowering the bad cholesterol level of the body. As the game requires continuous running and movement, it increases the body's metabolism and the rate of calories burnt at a higher rate.

Football should be played if not regularly then at least in an interval of 3-4 days. Any sport in your day to day life routine can benefit your health in many ways.





# Football Enables Friendships and Fosters Global Relationships

Sports have long been idealized as a way to heal wounds, mend fences and rise above differences among cultures and nations. For instance, the Olympics aims ‘to build a peaceful and better world’ with sports.

Football is one of the most popular sports in the world. It is more like an emotion for football fans rather than just a sport. As the game is loved unconditionally by people from every corner of the world, it can contribute in improving the relationship between countries.

Usually, many high-profile guests like presidents, prime ministers and leading businessmen attend football matches to encourage bilateral meetings. These matches are often seen as an ice-breaker

between countries that have had differences since long.

The football tournaments are filled with such examples that have sweetened the sour relationship between two countries, for instance, the match between USA and Iran in FIFA World Cup 1998, hosted by France is probably the most famous in this category. Before the game, President Clinton expressed that the match would become a ray of hope to end the tensions between Iran and the USA. The match encourages leaders from both the nations to talk on mutual grounds and spread peace between the two nations again. The game was played on 21 June 1998 and this day was declared as “Fair Play Day” by FIFA.

Although football can't stop wars between countries and neither can the game eliminate the injustice completely, it provides a platform for countries to improve their bilateral relations and erase the tension between them.

Football can be a better option to enhance the tendencies and nationalistic expressions between countries. On the contrary, this game can bring fans and politicians from two or more countries together, which creates a sense of unity. As football is like religion for its fans and people from all over the world are emotionally attached to this game, this game can promote peace and foster global relationships.





## CHAPTER 8

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# A Game of Discipline and Devotion

Hundreds and thousands of games are played across the world every year. Every region, every country has its own game, but few sports rule across the borders; few sports are loved and played by people from different regions, countries and ethics. Football is one such game which has fans from every part of the world. The game is played in national and international tournaments, club leagues and even in a small playground nearby. One doesn't need to have a lot of equipment and accessories or a huge setup to play this game. The game of football is quite simple and can be played by people belonging to any age group, anywhere between two teams.

Every sport teaches something, and football teaches a lot to its players, right from dedication, enthusiasm and passion to self-confidence. There are several

physical and mental health benefits of playing football and with discipline and dedication wonders can be achieved.

People from all over the world, love to watch football. Many kids want to play this game but due to lack of facilities and knowledge about football, they usually end up disappointed. Many organizations, clubs and NGOs are in action to promote football and to make sure every kid across countries and regions can have access to this particular game.

There are a lot of other benefits of playing football too. Football teaches team building. There are eleven players in one team, all from different backgrounds having different strengths and weaknesses. While playing together with different people, one can easily learn to respect and understand each another. A player needs to have complete devotion towards the game; in this way, they can blend their abilities and talents and can cooperate with other members to reach the goal.

Football is a team game. The performance of one single person matters but it can't bring victory. The joint effort of all the team members can lead the team to success. Football teaches people to overcome pride and selfishness. It teaches to work as a team and to respect one another.

It involves self-discipline combined with a passionate commitment to a task and a burning desire to see it through. The key to success of the children

attributes to their discipline, devotion and determination.

In short, the game of football teaches that one can only lead to success with ultimate devotion and mutual efforts.





# Cherish the Victories Together

Victory in football is not just about scoring goals. Often misinterpreted, victory in football is not just about defeating your opponent but winning the game together. The F4F programme believes in propagating 'victory' as one of the core values to all its participants around the globe.

Started back in 2013 with only eight participating countries, the F4F has now achieved victory by bringing together promising youngsters from sixty-four participating nations. It believes in achieving the victory of success by walking down the path of togetherness. This astounding initiative believes that if the value of victory is correctly communicated to young football enthusiasts, then a better football culture can be harvested throughout the globe.

### **Victory in Creating the Fervour for Football**

Knitting the bonds of friendship with the help of football, F4F has achieved victory in taking the

program way beyond the borders of the popular football playing nations like Brazil, Argentina, the UK and Germany to less-popular football playing nations like Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. In this way, the F4F wants its participants to understand the importance of victory by including others in the game and consequently inspiring them to achieve success.

Football is by far the most popular game in the world, and so triggering the same kind of passion and aspiration among others is certainly one of its prime goals. It can neither be played alone, nor can any game can be won alone, and for that reason, motivating others to participate and play is certainly a victory in itself.

### **Victory in Overcoming Obstacles**

In 2017, F4F included young and talented footballers from underprivileged families of countries with lesser means or developing countries to offer them the exposure they deserve. Hence, the programme wants its participants to understand the importance of winning against all the odds and continuing their dreams of playing football.

The importance of such victories in football is paramount as many past and present legends of the game have emerged from families with lesser means. The F4F forum aims to inject the same spirit of passion and courage among its participants which is required to achieve both individual and team goals.

## **Victory in Generating Compassion**

Winning a football game is all about playing as a team. The players must know the strength and weaknesses of each other and should learn to create collective strength rather than pointing out the weaknesses of individual teammates. The F4F social programme offers its participants the opportunity for rejoicing collective team victories by creating eight-a-side teams comprising of both boys and girls along with participants with special needs. This way F4F tries to make the participants realize the importance of team building and achieving victories together.

Winning is perhaps the most important part of any game. But, it is not just about defeating the opponent by a huge goal margin. F4F promotes 'victory' as a value to make its participants understand the importance of including everyone, even opponents, in the path of achieving success as a professional footballer.

In summation, perhaps it is worth noting a quote by Grantland Rice who said, "Failure isn't bad if it does not attack the heart, and success is all right if it does not go to the head."

Winning and losing are both very temporary things. Having won or lost on the sporting field, the most important thing is how you deal with the result and move forward. Gloating over a victory or sulking over a loss is eventually standing still.

There is a misconception that competition is bad, that self-esteem gets affected if a child loses. But to lose is not to be a loser. If a child can experience the thrill of winning and the disappointment of losing early in life through competitive football, they will be well-equipped for the reality and hardships of life.





# Carrying Forward Football Traditions

One of the best part of sports is a tradition. Whether it's an iconic uniform, a stadium that has played host to some of the biggest games in history or a unique pre-game moment passed down from generation to generation, tradition is without a doubt one of the reasons why we love sports.

The fifth season of the children's social programme initiated by the F4F aims to promote 'tradition' as one of the core values among its participants. Football traditions have a century-old history. Considered as one of the oldest team games in the world, football has a rich history and heritage.

F4F aims at instilling the same traditional values which the game has nestled for generations in young participants. This unique international initiative also makes arrangement for the participants to get first-

hand experience in witnessing international football matches from the stadium. These kinds of opportunities often help youngsters to feel the vibe and get exposed to the bastions of football culture.

### **Tradition of Friendship**

F4F promotes the idea of establishing a football culture that fosters friendship and unity. Carrying forward the tradition of international football clubs where people from diverse nations play together as a team, F4F is developing teams with young participants from different countries by creating eight-a-side teams comprising of both boys and girls along with participants with special needs. This way, F4F tries to help participants realize the importance of this tradition of playing together with people from diverse ethnic and language backgrounds.

### **The Tradition of Love for the Game**

Everyone who loves football knows the story of the 'Christmas Truce'. For those who don't, 'Christmas Truce' refers to a series of widespread but unofficial ceasefires along the Western Front of World War I on 25th of December, 1914. During this event, the British, German, French and Belgian armies joined together to play friendly football matches. This iconic moment showcasing the love for the game has become a part of the great football tradition.

Similarly, F4F also aims at promoting this tradition of love for the game among its young participants. The



initiative wants its participants to understand the significance of carrying forward this tradition and show how the love for the game can actually bring people together.

### **The tradition of Overcoming Obstacles**

Football is a game for everyone. Many times, in the history of the game, players have advanced from challenging backgrounds. Now to take the tradition forward F4F is also providing an opportunity and platform for talented youngsters belonging to underprivileged families from developed countries or countries with lesser means.

F4F, as an initiative, values this tradition and wants to propagate the same by offering deserving young footballers a chance to prove themselves on an international platform. Football is an extremely dynamic game, and footballers need to overcome many hurdles to achieve the goal. F4F aims to recognize that tradition by offering its participants an opportunity to navigate past all the socio-economic and financial obstacles and score the ultimate goal in life by becoming a professional footballer.

By including participants from as much as sixty-four nations, F4F has proved itself to be a successful flag bearer of the game. The initiative has followed the exact traditions that make football so popular throughout the world. For that reason, the organizers also believe in transmitting the same traditions to all of its participants so that they grow up to become perfect ambassadors of this wonderful game.



# Learning to Honour

The initiative undertaken by the F4F promotes honour as one of the core values among its young participators. This international social programme reflects on the importance of introducing the idea of honouring each other and the game.

Considering the fact that football is a very dynamic and physical sporting activity, things tend to get out of control at times. Under such situations, well-groomed players who understand the value of honouring each other, the game and the officials tend to behave more professionally than the ones who are not.

F4F wants to make sure that all of its young talent understands and values each other and the game. Injecting the sense of honour at a very nascent age helps to ensure that they grow up to be professional footballers and people who honour and respect any sport.

## **Honouring the Game**

Honouring the game and its rules is what makes one a complete professional. F4F attempts to groom the young professionals with similar values for that reason. Keeping that aspect in mind, the F4F took all of their sixty-four young participants to the final of FIFA Confederations Cup 2017 which was held at the St. Petersburg Stadium.

The exposure of the young brigade to a live game of such paramount stature certainly works. This event helped the aspiring footballers to comprehend the manner in which leading professional footballers behave and act during the game.

## **Honouring the Officials**

With the process of forming the teams and organizing the games, F4F wants its young participants to understand and honour the officials of the game. F4F wants its youngsters to understand that while they are on the field, the referees' and the other officials' decisions are final.

## **Honouring the Teammates**

F4F will segregate the sixty-four young footballers into teams with eight members each. Each team will have both boys and girls along with youngsters with special needs. By making the teams more dynamic and diverse, F4F is trying to make the participants realize the importance of respecting and honouring each team member's strengths and weaknesses.

## **Honouring the Opponent**

Football is a tedious game. It pushes players to a certain limit where gaining victory becomes the ultimate aim. Being a physically straining game, it also exposes participants to rash tackles and exchange of harsh words among themselves.

However, F4F does not want its participants to believe that football is a game where opponents are perceived as enemies. Irrespective of the results, the participants must learn to honour the opponent. In this way, harmony and friendship can be restored.

Honouring the rules of the game, the officials, the teammates and the opponents is the most important aspect of any game. The slightest lack of honour can make a footballer undisciplined. F4F wants to harvest a football culture which recognizes honour as one of the foremost values and aims at exposing the youngsters to the same.



# A Great Recipe for Perfect Life

The main focus of the F4F is to inculcate good football spirit among the children, promote sports and healthy lifestyle among the young generation, nurture acceptance and respect among different cultures and races and foster friendship among children from different countries.

In 2017, India too teamed up with F4F in addition to sixty-three other countries. As a part of this programme, all participating countries celebrate the International Day of Football and Friendship (April 25) every year by arranging friendly football matches with an aim to promote values of friendship, fairness, equality, health, devotion, peace, traditions, victory and honour.

### **How Football Promotes Friendship?**

Football and other sports provide a great opportunity to spend time with old friends or to make new friends

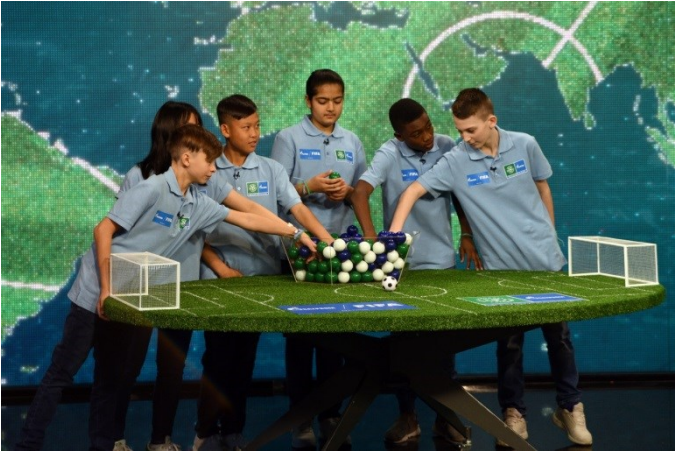
for everyone. They get to spend time with each other, together learn the practice of working hard and fight together to win a game. When players with different histories, cultures, traditions, faiths and values play against each other, it fosters friendship among them. The friendship nurtured through sports remains lifelong for some, making their journey memorable.

- Participating in football and other sports develop a feeling of belonging among children. It creates a social circle for them outside the school where they can interact and enjoy.
- When youngsters participate in competitions and games together on the field, it provides them with an opportunity to mingle with other people who also like and enjoy the game. Those who share common interests, values and thinking often get along well.
- When people play on the football field, they have to follow the same rules. This builds trust with each other.
- Since football needs team play, the participants can win by thriving on each other's strengths and covering weaknesses. They come to know a lot about each other and are always there for their teammates and friends, even in personal life situations.
- The post-game meetings and parties further develop youngsters' social circle and allow them to find friends of different ethnicities.



- The aim of F4F is to teach children and youth how to treat their fellow players from their team or opposite team with equal respect and fairness. It is important that children learn how to be friends as well as rivals and maintain a healthy relationship despite belonging to the opposite teams.
- One of the principal benefits of friendship through football is that it enhances self-esteem in children and youngsters. They expect their peers to support, praise and encourage them for their playing abilities.
- Sports bring loyalty and closeness among children, which teaches them to support each other and share each other's feelings and emotions.
- The differences that arise between them teaches them how to make efforts to resolve conflicts.

An instrument called Sports Friendship Quality Scale (SFQS) is a six-factor scale that measures enhancement in self-esteem and support, devotion, loyalty and closeness, common interests, friendship and pleasurable game, resolving differences and conflict.



# Spreading the Language of Football

Football has become one of the most popular sports among children across the world. Apart from the energy and enthusiasm, the game benefits players' health, both physical and mental. The game also teaches different values.

As mentioned earlier, the F4F initiative by FIFA and Gazprom is focused on teaching the nine basic values to children that include friendship, tradition, equality, devotion, honour, peace, fairness, victory and health.

**Health:** Similar to other games, football has many health benefits, but it is a more physically demanding game than others. It needs high stamina and strength to stay continuously active on the football ground. It benefits the overall health of player by improving their accuracy and strength.

Friendship, fairness and equality: Football has eleven players in each team. During Football for Friendship matches, players come from different backgrounds and ethics, which help children to learn and respect others in a better way. As all the players need to play in proper coordination to win the game, it teaches the power of teamwork and how to get success while playing together. On the field, players need to maintain fairness among themselves to avoid any penalties, which can affect their points in the match.

Tradition, devotion and honour: As the teams in the F4F matches are a perfect blend of players from different countries; it becomes quite easy for children to learn different tradition and respect them. The complete devotion of children in the game helps to deal with all kinds of obstacles throughout their life.

Peace: Football is among the best possible mediums to foster the friendship between countries having conflicts for a long time. History has witnessed many such cases where football has become the medium to kick-start the conversation between the countries. Football can trigger the initiatives that can further lead to peace.

After all, football is the most popular game in the world as compared to other sports. The UK's English Premier League (EPL) has the maximum number of fans. To maximize the reach of football across different countries, F4F is taking numerous initiatives

to help children learn to play the game properly. With access to proper equipment, guidance and experienced coaches, children from small towns can also learn to play football professionally and can pursue a career as well.



# Friendship Bracelets

What's the significance of friendship bracelets?

Well, theoretically, a friendship bracelet is made of strings. Friendship bracelets are not extremely beautiful and interesting, but they carry special meaning for the person who makes them and the one who wear them.

The friendship bracelet is an official symbol of the F4F programme showcasing the sign of tolerance, equality and healthy lifestyle. The bracelet is made of two simple strings of blue and green colour. Blue symbolizes a cloudless and peaceful sky, while green represents the colour of the football field, available for everyone worldwide regardless of their age, gender and social strata.

Tying a friendship bracelet on each other's hands is a symbolic action of making friends and demonstrating a commitment to the key values of the programme – tolerance and friendship among people from different

countries. Participants of this programme exchange friendship bracelets before friendly football matches and other events.

As the ambassadors of the F4F movement, young footballers also present friendship bracelets to famous sportsmen, artists, journalists and representatives of the authorities, promoting F4F values and attracting new supporters of the F4F movement.

So, next time you see one, remember their meaning and you'll smile to yourself, maybe remembering a friend.







# Friendship and Unity Icons

## (F4F Mascots)

What are mascots and why are they so important to sports teams and schools?

Do you remember who your school or sports team mascot was? Perhaps it was an eagle, a bulldog or a warrior. I still remember F4F mascots – Freddy and Freida.

In 2017, the dog Freddy and the cat Freida created by famous artist Bill Aspray were the official mascots of the F4F programme. These characters impersonate the global idea of the programme that friendship has no face, nationality or language, and it is free from prejudice. F4F mascots give an example to follow: the dog and the cat keep harmony in their relationship; they live in peace and friendship. The names Freddy and Freida were chosen for some reason, the first letters refer to the world of friendship.

Freddy, the tan and white dog, has big floppy ears. He loves going on 'walkies' in parks, chasing rabbits, having adventures, playing ball and getting muddy! He's very loyal and protective of Freida and always takes care of her.

Freida, the little marmalade cat is quite independent and very inquisitive. She is always going off exploring the neighbourhood and sometimes getting into trouble. But, she also likes nothing better than curling up for a nap somewhere nice and warm, usually against Freddy's warm tummy.

They both give me a sense of pride, loyalty, unity and belonging and these are feelings that will stick with me for the rest of my life. Mascots create unity between communities. The bonds that are formed by this unity transcend normal social dividers. The pride that comes from this unity can motivate and inspire young ambassadors like me to do their best.





# Humanity Triumphs Political Tensions

Football for Friendship social programme has taught me that peace and humanity are not just words in a book. India and Pakistan have a long history of bitter relations but programmes like F4F have played an important role in bringing people closer. I have watched, played and became friends with Yusuf Moazzam, a boy from Pakistan and his family despite everything that my television in Mohali says. It is considered as having 'the power to bring people together, bridge differences and promote communication and understanding'.

They're from Lahore and I'm from Mohali, but we met each other at Dubai Airport on the way to St. Petersburg, Russia. Through F4F, and we've been friends ever since.

When India and Pakistan are mentioned, a history of the animosity comes to mind. But our friendship found its way, breaking the bar of hatred and distance. All these divisions are in our minds. We're so close geographically, but history has made us apart.

People usually judge and make assumptions based on information they read from internet or television, but they need to come to the events like this, where they can interact and get to know other nationalities and learn that we all are one.

Despite the political bitterness between our motherlands, we defined the tale of our friendship beyond boundaries.

Political tensions between India and Pakistan maybe are at its peak, but the bond of humanity and kindness still remains intact.

Football is not merely a game I play or enjoy; it's a lot more than that. We haven't got a chance to visit each other's homes owing to visa issues as yet. But despite the divide, F4F was the catalyst in our friendship, and our hearts are always united.







# Football for Friendship as a Tool for Achieving SDGs

According to me, Football for Friendship plays an important role in the development of society and is a key contributor to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

F4F has consistently proved to be a cost-effective and flexible tool for promoting peace and development objectives. Harnessing the unique potential of football, Football for Friendship has long been bringing people and organizations together and supporting initiatives from mega football events to the grassroots level. It contributes to the physical well-being of all young ambassadors regardless of gender or ethnicity; its reach is unparalleled. In addition to having a direct impact on physical fitness and combating non-communicable diseases, F4F also plays a role in

educating communities as well as promoting an active lifestyle.

Young ambassadors like me benefit tremendously from practising physical activity. Integrated into the school curriculum, football and other sports activities can act as an innovative means to provide comprehensive and quality education.

Gazprom has been running its F4F social programme since 2013 with the aim of training and empowering young leaders from across the globe. F4F harnesses the core values, such as dialogue, respect, inclusion and tolerance. In 2017, the programme invited the youth and officials from sixty-four countries.

Furthermore, Football for Friendship in its simplest form encourages balanced participation and has the capacity to promote and achieve gender equality within societies. Their participation can break down gender stereotypes, improve girls' self-confidence and contribute to the universal values of equality.

In 2017, I was one of the young ambassadors, and I represented India. The programme provides an opportunity for girls to participate in the activities and promote gender equality safely and I was proud to be a part of it.

Football for Friendship contributes to creating more social and economic development. In June last

year, I witnessed how F4F promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities. It is a great example of how Football for Friendship can foster social development by changing the perception about people with disabilities and providing them with an opportunity to participate in F4F.

Sports are particularly effective for youth who may grow up in an environment of intolerance to those on the other side of civil conflicts, yet they often share a passion for the same sports. Thus, playing sports together and bringing sports stars to meet them to promote peace - can have a transformative impact on them.

F4F has a unique and irreplaceable capacity to unite people, going far beyond ethnic, religious or social differences. I am convinced that Football for Friendship can in the long-term serve as an emissary of peace.

Such initiatives have been made possible only because of a powerful network of partners and stakeholders such as participating countries, FIFA, the international Paralympic committee, international and national football federations, clubs and the private sector including sports and football goods producers. They are united with a common commitment to use Football for Friendship as a tool for sustainable development.

I must give full recognition to the positive impact that Football for Friendship makes at the community

level right across the globe. The role that the F4F plays in contributing to sustainable development in areas like health, education, gender equality and economic development deserves the same amount of attention as the glitz and glamour of high-performance football events.

It will keep bringing people together, promoting a more inclusive and peaceful world through its universal values and principles. It is and will continue to be, one of the most cost-effective and versatile tools to promote the key values and objectives, in particular in achieving SDGs.







# Five Invaluable Lessons I Learnt

We all love to watch children play. They love to learn new sports and activities. Sports, not only builds confidence and imagination but also their muscles. Playing a sport is much better and healthier than letting the kids watch television or play a video game.

It is truly said that a healthy body definitely has a healthy mind. I have seen kids on a playground. It does not matter if they are playing informally or competitive play.

Sports is significant for children.

While playing sports, kids learn many new skills and also enjoy themselves. There are many benefits of playing sports that parents should keep in mind. However, at almost thirteen, I've come up with five invaluable lessons I learnt after participating in the F4F event in Russia.

## **Lesson #1 - Sports Helps to Build Imagination and Confidence**

Sports helps children learn to overcome their fears. They also learn new things and also build their self-confidence. It is proven that when children are physically active and successful in their actions, they show advanced levels of confidence and a higher sense of achievement.

When a child has successfully somersaulted for the first time or when he or she has climbed till the end of the monkey bar, their self-esteem spikes! They are willing to take bigger challenges.

## **Lesson #2 - Sports Helps to Develop Athletic and Important Motor Skills**

Children grow and keep developing even without realizing it! Simple activities like touching their own toes teach them about coordination and balance. When kids play with a ball, they strengthen their motor skills.

Fitness has many benefits. Children who play sports are most likely to improve muscle strength and stamina, flexibility, body composition and cardiorespiratory endurance. Sports also help them to get through the entire day without fatigue.

## **Lesson #3 - Improved Academic Performance**

The connection between the body and mind has been recognized scientifically. It has been proved by

repeated and periodic research that sports can have an influence on intellectual skills, academic behaviour and attitudes. All of these are important requisites of enhanced academic performance. Sports also help children to enhance concentration and attention resulting in better classroom behaviour.

#### **Lesson #4 - Sports Means Healthy Lifestyle**

Children nowadays may dream about becoming famous athletes or celebrities. Unfortunately, that dream remains just a dream as children are largely unhealthy and inactive due to their sedentary lifestyle these days. Physical activity is the best solution for children to lead a healthy way of life. Sports help to reduce the risk of chronic diseases like hypertension, heart diseases and diabetes. Sports help to increase immunity and improves metabolism in children. Children who indulge in sports will grow into emotionally balanced and physically active adults.

#### **Lesson #5 - Give Respect and Take Respect Through Sports**

By engaging your kids in sports, parents can make them learn to respect themselves and other people. Sports also teach creative thinking and team building abilities. Children become more responsible and participative in all aspects of life.

Parents must take this significant step by engaging their children in sports to make them better humans in society.



# International Children's Press Centre, A Place to Learn and Celebrate

One significant part of the programme is the F4F international children's press centre. The press forum enabled young journalists from different countries to work alongside one another, encouraging initiative and creativity, facilitating active participation and providing an intercultural learning experience.

I reported on the activities of young ambassadors by spreading awareness on the nine values (friendship, equality, fairness, health, peace, devotion, victory, traditions and honour) of the F4F programme.

During the forum, I had an opportunity to meet and discuss the programme values and communicate with my peers from other countries, football stars,

international journalists, child and youth publications, television journalists and famous artists around the world including the global ambassador of the program, Franz Beckenbauer.

Forum events are covered by around 2000 journalists from the major global media houses as well as sixty-four young reporters from Europe, Asia, Africa, and South and North America who joined the International Children's Press Centre. They covered the activities of the Football for Friendship 2017 International Championship and Gazprom Football for Friendship 2017 International Children's Forum.

We all worked in four media directions namely: International Football for Friendship TV channel, F4F newspaper, new media and F4F social networks, blogs and web pages. I wrote reports, took interviews and developed media content for leading international media publications of the participating countries.

The young journalists presented their work to the forum's audience and received certificates of participation and other awards.

During the event, one young player from each of the eight teams in the F4F 2017 was called upon the stage to speak about his or her team of friendship. Yusuf Moazzam, a young footballer from Pakistan, was selected to represent my Yellow team.

The forum culminated with the awarding of The Nine Values Cup that was given by young participants

of Football for Friendship to professional clubs for social projects that practically perform values of the program: friendship, equality, fairness, health, peace, devotion, victory, traditions and honour. This unique trophy with no analogue in sports community was presented for the second time.

The Football for Friendship Nine Values Cup went to Real Madrid and it was chosen by children who had taken part in the global sixty four country voting held shortly before the forum. Children selected Real Madrid for Nine Values Cup on the basis of the club's initiatives in support and development of youth football as well as help for young footballers from developing countries.

After the forum, all the participants watched the finals of FIFA Confederation Cup 2017 between Chile and Germany at the St. Petersburg Stadium.

The purpose of the event was to explain and to discuss expanding the influence of youth media on the formation of moral and spiritual values, high culture, civic awareness and tolerance among the younger generation. Young reporters of the International Children's Press Centre were talented children who were keen about football and showed great promise in sports journalism. They were actively involved in the F4F programme and helped to share its key values.

The other young reporters and I had a great opportunity to learn from professional reporters and get invaluable experience of self-guided work.





# F4F Open Draw - A Truly Invaluable Experience

The Open Draw for the sixth season of Football for Friendship was held in Moscow. I, along with five other young ambassadors from different countries: Russia Zahar Badyuk (Russia), Runqi Cui (China), Juan Manuel Pinola Silveira (Uruguay), Lilya Matsumoto (Japan) and Christopher Sowah Mensah (Ghana), was invited for the Football for Friendship Open Draw 2018.

As part of the team, I experienced an incredible trip to Russia. I made many new friends that I met during the trip. Moscow during snowfall looks like a magical winter wonderland. Covered by a blanket of snow, the city looks like a picture-perfect place, and must undoubtedly be a thrill to capture.

On the second day, I along with five other ambassadors practised for the Open Draw shooting at

Cosmoc Hotel. We all participated in different activities like how to express our emotions, how to spell difficult words and many more.

Next day, I, along with my father, went to Russia Today's studio for the final production shoot of Open Draw. I was introduced to executive producer and given a brief introduction about the studio. The location was indoor, a TV production studio with multiple camera setup and lights. Multiple cameras help to record from different angles simultaneously and shoot scenes much faster. Soon, I went to the dressing room and changed my shirt. The makeup artist did my makeup for the shoot. I could not get over how amazing she made me look and feel. Before the shoot, I went into the control room, and lavalier microphones were clipped to my shirt. Finally, the big moment! I went inside the production house and positioned myself at the allotted place for the final shoot.

The Chairman of the Board of Directors of Public Joint Stock Company (PJSC) Gazprom, Mr. Viktor Zubkov, FIFA Secretary General Ms. Fatma Samoura, Russian figure skater and Olympic champion Ms. Adelina Sotnikova, two-time champion of Russia and European rugby champion in wheelchairs Mr. Yuri Kamenets, the Legend of world football Mr. Marco van Basten addressed to the participants with the words of support for the programme Football for Friendship.

Working together for Open Draw ceremony meant I spent many hours planning, writing, editing, shooting and combining them so the episode flowed together. The Open Draw production was more difficult than anyone thought it would be.

In between the recording, I had mini breaks and had some snacks such as juice and banana. In the afternoon I went to the canteen, and they served me delicious food. It was a big canteen, and I even had the chance to interact with journalists.

Technology has made so much possible with this project. Through social media, including Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and Skype, we were able to meet face to face or video call, making our shooting and friendship easy.

For the next two days, I went sightseeing around the city of Moscow. Moscow is wonderful and monumental, packed with museums, art galleries, theatres and beautiful old buildings. There's always something to see – even a trip on the Metro with its magnificent marble stations is a treat.

I visited GUM, an iconic and gorgeous looking department store with its arched arcades and wrought iron balconies. It's home to an array of designer stores. I got a chance to visit the Luzhniki Stadium and Spartak Stadium, the official venues for the FIFA World Cup.

In the evening, we went to VDNKh Ice Skating Rink where I enjoyed skating with melodious music.

I continue to communicate with friends around the globe and I value the friendships I now have with them. I suppose this is the best part of the project and even though at times communication was difficult, we worked together and created something quite magical.

The skills I learnt, the experience I had and friendships I made during the Open Draw are invaluable and forever.





## CHAPTER 21

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# Football for Friendship Is...

F is for Friendship, who plays together.

E is for Equality, all humans are equal in fundamental worth or social status.

P is for Peace, peace at home and peace in the world.

T is for Tradition, I love tradition. I love that football is filled with different traditions.

F is for Fairness, treat all in a reasonable and honest way.

D is for Devotion, don't worry about anything - just work hard.

V is for Victory, the spirit of passion and courage.

H is for Health, full of stamina, endurance and strength.

H is for Honour, believing in pride and the notion of integrity.

F is for Football for Friendship, providing everyone with a pair of shoes which fit all these values.



Football can 'enable conversations', which could help soothe tensions between countries, this is the winning speech from Ananya Kamboj who's all set for global Football For Friendship (F4F) social programme in Russia

## ..and she puts her best foot forward

JASMINE SINGH

Ananya Kamboj, an eighth standard student from Vivek High School, Mohali, is absolutely clear that she wants to be a journalist when she grows up, a career choice that is not going to change. Meanwhile, it is her love for football that will now be taking her to Russia.

Ananya has been selected to represent India as a young journalist at the global Football For Friendship (F4F) social programme in Russia. Clearly, this one really loves and follows football. "Yes, I do, I watch all the matches and my favourite team is Minerva Punjab FC," she says softly.

The F4F programme, supported by Gasprem and FIFA, focuses on the development of children's football, fostering tolerance and respect for different cultures and nationalities among children from different countries. India joins the pro-



Ananya's winning entry spoke of the role of football in enabling conversations, which could help soothe tensions and foster engagement between countries and people across the globe.



gramme for the first time and will participate alongside 60 other countries.

Ananya was shortlisted as the F4F young journalist from India after participating in a contest conducted by F4F, supported by Mission XI Million, programme of the FIFA U-17 World Cup India 2017. The contest saw entries from over 20 cities. Ananya's winning entry spoke of the role of football in enabling conversations, which could help soothe tensions and foster engagement between countries and people across the globe.

"I came to know about this from

social media. I then wrote a blog on the same, mentioning the famous match between US and Iran that took place at the FIFA World Cup in 1998. I strongly believe that football can strengthen friendship between the two nations," Ananya looks at her father, Vikram Kamboj who nods in approval. This young student leaves for Russia on June 26. Slightly nervous and extremely excited, Ananya hopes to be selected in Russia. "If I make it in Russia then I would be giving speech at the opening ceremony at Olympics and Para Olympics, including one at Modern United Nations." As part of the three assignments that she needs to complete before heading for the programme, Ananya has already

recorded the interview of Ranjit Bajaj, owner and executive director at Minerva Punjab FC, she has collected 600 Friendship messages that will be added to the friendship bank in Russia and lastly, she has written a real life football friendship incident.

As she prepares for her big step, this little girl is also flooded with congratulatory messages from friends and teachers. So are the expectations really high? "Yes," Ananya sums up the emotion in one word. After a minute's thought, figuring she can elaborate more, she adds, "Everyone is saying keep it up and I will try to do my best," she looks at her father again, who is definitely proud of his daughter, Vaisi.

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