

Dear friends,

Tournament for mentally disabled children.

Not long ago I visited one orphanage for children with mental disabilities. I was pleased to see that teams of children from 5-6 other orphanages for children with mental disabilities had come to this orphanage for a football tournament. But what happened shocked me. One PE teacher brought to this tournament 2 teams instead one. One team was from an orphanage with children who are mentally disabled but the other team was hidden away until the final. And that team was children from a local football club. So in the final the teacher cheated and he put on the field healthy children against mentally disabled children – just in order to win the final. I was shocked and really disappointed. In our country this approach there is everywhere. Coaches, parents, directors of clubs and others don't see football as possibility for holistic development of children but see as opportunity to increase their self-worth, pride and recognition. We want to change this formula. And main focus of our work is to change approach to football in our area among all involved to this.

New opportunity. Partnership with FA of Rivne region.

A few years ago I was invited by the head of the FA in Rivne district (Yaroslav) to be responsible for children's tournaments run by his FA for teams from villages. We did it for few years. One year ago, he became executive director of Rivne region FA (16 districts). Last year he invited me to be a member of discipline committee of the FA. It was great shock to see total corruption in our football. Months ago we had a good meeting to discuss what can be our partnership in order make football in our region better. He told me that he is ready to give leadership for youth football to Christians who are involved to sport. It was nice to hear. Now we should write the programme what we can do next year together. Please pray for God's guidance in this process and partnership.

We have already experience how our partnership with the local FA changed their approach to children in better way. A few years ago we wanted to do seminar for our coaches who coach children teams from villages. We asked the Ukrainian FA to run a seminar for grass roots coaches but they told us that it is impossible to run such a seminar for low level coaches. What they can offer was just UEFA B seminar that will cost 2000\$ for each coach. I was disappointed and told them that in many European countries there are many seminars for children's coaches. It didn't help.

Then together with Stuart Weir (Verite Sport), John Squires (Bolton Wanderers) and the English FA we did an English FA Level 1 course at Ukraine for our coaches. The Ukraine FA sent an observer to our course. The following year the Ukrainian FA set up seminars for children's coaches. First it was a trial run in 3 region (including Rivne region), and now it is everywhere in Ukraine.

Partnership with school.

I wrote before that in our city there is very difficult situation with football fields and with gyms where you can play football during winter time (it can be up to 6-7 months when it is impossible to play outside). In our city there are 300,000 people. And we have just 6 sports gyms where it is possible to play football (5 a side). 4 of these gyms are in public schools and most of these gyms are occupied by private companies for their workers or management. So to get sport gyms for simple people is almost impossible because the companies pay much more to directors of schools than children's clubs can afford. But we are blessed by God and we have a 7 year partnership with one school and occupied their sports gym and also share it with our partners as well.

This year the director of this school asked our help. They need to set up a new computer class. That was the demand of local government but they didn't give resources for that. So we are looking for 10 used but in good condition computers. If you have idea how to help us it will be great to be able to help. We really appreciate our partnership with this school who give us opportunity to allow children to play football during the winter time.

Partnership with Verite Sport (veritesport.org).

For many years we have had a good partnership with Verite Sport. This year they presented us with a gift from the English FA. Some boxes with new kit from the English FA (also together with t-shirts, jackets etc). We were able to give the kit out to players in our teams and to our partners. Also it

was a useful gift to develop partnership with some local sports leaders. Everybody likes to get some present from the English FA. Specially thanks to Gerrit Werkman from Netherlands who helped to bring it to us.

This partnership gave us new idea how we can be helpful in our region. There is massive number of teams of children and adults who don't have team kit to play in. So we are ready to set up a project to collect used - but in good conditions football kit - to share it with such clubs. If you have ideas how to help us with this please contact us. It would be nice to hear.

Partnership with BallProject.

During few last years we have great partnership with BallProject. It is a fund which helps children play. During the last few years we got from there some significant donations to buy balls for children's teams. We are really thankful for this partnership. Very often we can see how children practise here with one or few balls. Sometimes coach gives the one ball to children and they play. Because of our partnership with Ball Project and a few other organizations that helped us with equipment, our teams has enough balls and equipment to practise properly. Also it gives us more authority and respect and makes our words more significant so we can easily to share our principles and values.

Children tournament in Stepan.

One of our children's teams is located in Stepan. The local vicar is also the coach of 2 teams. During many years we had Easter tournament for children there. It was 6-8 teams coming from whole region and even from Belarus. It was great celebration for whole village. In Ukraine we have 2 times where it is very easy to share news about God's grace with people and when they are really listen – it is Christmas and Easter. So many years we did this tournament at Easter and where possible to share about God's news with coaches of children teams. This year we moved tournament to June and it will be dedicated to the Day of Defence of Children.

Sport and faith?

We are a Christian ministry. But we work in 2 directions. One direction – is to help churches to set up their football ministries, to equip their coaches, to support them as we can. But another direction is also very significant to us. We want to change the world of football in our region so that it meets God's standard for the human being.

Zhenya Dontsov
Executive director of Standard Sport.