Tribute to Pastor Enoch Adeboye

Spiritual Pillar of Nigerian Sports @ 69

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Pastor Enoch Adeboye is one of the most remarkable men of our time. All over the world he is known as preacher, teacher, evangelist, mentor, motivator and intercessor. His impact globally is felt in his ministrations, which have served to win countless souls for the Kingdom of God. One side of Pastor Adeboye that is not very well known is the fact that in his youth and his days as university teacher, he was a keen sportsman excelling in boxing and volleyball. At the University of Lagos he became the school’s volleyball coach. For those who marvel at his level of fitness despite his age, there you have your answer. As this exceptional servant of God celebrates 69 years of a remarkable journey on earth, we bring you the sporting side of this man who has continued to stress the importance of fitness not only to members of his church but to the world at large. There are also other interesting stories inside to make your day.

Paul Bankole
Enoch Adejare Adeboye was born on Monday 2nd of March, 1942, at the Ayesanmi Eyindin compound, in Ifewara village, Osun State, Nigeria. His father was Pa Moses Adeboye, while his mother was Mama Esther Adeboye.

From the moment he was born, he was welcome into poverty, rivalry and very stiff competition. Everything and everyone around him was poor. Growing up for him was not only competitive; it was a matter of “survival of the fittest”. Adeboye was introduced into sports as a toddler, since he had to walk long distances to the farm with his parents. Walking is a sport recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Commonwealth Games and the National Sports Commission (NSC) in Nigeria. He was also introduced to running at a very early age, because as the youngest of eleven children, he was subjected – in accordance to Yoruba tradition and custom, to run endless errands for his ten older ones and of course, his parents.

Adeboye, by the special grace of God, attended Saint Stephen Anglican Primary school, Ifewara and Ilesha Grammar school, Ilesha. Youn Enoch Adejare went through the Primary and Secondary schools, faced with the massive mountain of poverty that consistently threatened to swallow up his dreams and terminate his destiny. But since greatness is for champions and victory is for winners, and no one emerges a winner without a battle, Enoch Adejare – determined to succeed academically, demonstrated exceptional ability in his studies particularly in Arithmetic and stood shoulder high above all his colleagues.

Apart from always being rated an “A” grade student, he was reported to have been a very quiet, gentle, humble, obedient and studious person, characteristics he still exhibits today. Poverty, however, still had a vicious grip on him and his parents, such that young Adeboye did not wear shoes on his feet for the first 18 years of his life simply because his parents could not afford one.

Adeboye grew up to love fishing and swimming – two very interesting sports. He was a member of the Aramolaran House sports’ club while at the Ilesha Grammar school, where the different sports houses engaged themselves in competitive games such as the 100 yards race. The young Adeboye was reported to have excelled, not only in short distance races, but also, in long distances races and other activities.

Because of his very quiet, gentle, humble and obedient dispositions, Adejare became very vulnerable to cheats and bullies who wanted to take undue advantage of him. He would however have none of such hence his decision to go into boxing, which became very handy as a means of
When he got to know about this, he thought to himself: “Ah, free meals for volleyball players?” That was it. He believed that was an opportunity for his 0-0-1 feeding situation to change to 1-1-1 and maybe have some extra. He jumped at the offer. His energy doubled as he would wake up very early in the morning to practice running, press-ups and weight lifting, because the criteria to qualify for the volleyball team included running a mile non-stop, doing 10 press-ups and weight lifting. When the screening exercise took place, he had practised so well that he could run 2 miles, do 20 press-ups and lift unimaginable weights. He became one of the most valuable volleyball players of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He was however forced to quit boxing at the University of Nigeria, when an opponent gave him a technical knockout, attacked him with a dagger. He had to choose between knocking out his opponents and being stabbed and facing his studies. The latter was a wise option.

The Biafran civil war did not allow Adejare to conclude his studies at Nsukka; hence he had to move to the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University and the University of Lagos. He ended up bagging a 1st class honours degree in mathematics, an M.Sc in Hydrodynamics and PhD in applied Mathematics.

He continued to participate in sporting activities, while lecturing at the University of Lagos and eventually became the head coach and technical adviser of the University of Lagos volleyball team. Enoch Adejare Adeboye became the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in 1981. Now aged 69, Pastor Adeboye is still very actively involved in sporting activities. He also uses sporting metaphors as teaching aids while on the pulpit. A great football fan, he personally shared how God used him to stand in the gap in 1996, during the Atlanta Olympic Games football match between Nigeria and Brazil, when Nigeria was on the verge of losing to Brazil. It must be noted that, that was the last time our beloved Super Eagles won a trophy at international football competition. Peter Rufai (Dodo Mayana), Nigeria’s ex-international goalkeeper and ex-captain, still shares his experience, about how God again used Pastor Adeboye, in October 2009, when the Super Eagles were to play the make or mar final qualifying match against Kenya, in Nairobi. To God be the glory for evermore.

Pastor Adeboye has also consistently encouraged the ministers and members of the Redeemed Christian Church of God to engage themselves in keep-fit exercises. Not only that, he leads his Ministers in short and long distance prayer walks, to demonstrate the importance of fitness. It is also on record that an international sports festival, involving sports like football, basketball, table-tennis and athletics – also comprising of specially able athletes like the deaf, dwarfs, blind and amputees, was successfully organized by the RCCG led Pastor Adeboye.

Pastor Adeboye discovered a young ball juggler in Abuja, invited him to display his skills in Lagos and thereafter decided to sponsor the young lad’s trip to England to continue his education and pursue football as a career. The boy’s travelling papers are being processed at the moment. It is based on the all the above – mentioned that on Friday the 1st of October, 2010, the swimmer, fisherman, short/long distance runner, volleyball player, football enthusiast, volleyball coach, accomplished boxer, exceptional keep-fit instructor and great lover of horses, sports philanthropist and intercessor, in the person of Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye, the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, was conferred with the SPIRITUAL PILLAR OF NIGERIAN SPORTS award, by the National Association of Nigerian Footballers (NANF) and Save Nigerian Sports Initiative (SANSI), to the glory of God and the redemption of Nigerian sports.

Bankole is head, Directorate of Sports of the Redeemed Christian Church of God
I received an invitation a few weeks ago from the Redeemed Christian Church of God, RCCG, to a special service to be held in the Church’s headquarters in Ebute Metta, Lagos. When Pastor Enoch Adeboye, the General Overseer, would be conducting the service, my whole thoughts about sport and religion came flooding back. I asked what the service was all about and he told me it was a special prayer service dedicated to sports in Nigeria. Initially, I could not believe it – Pastor Adeboye and Sport? That was a most unlikely combination, so I thought!

I have very many friends that belong to the church. I was a member myself several years ago. I know also that for some years now the church has been organizing football events amongst members the purpose of which was not clear. I often consoled myself with the knowledge that sport around the world has assumed such a monumental dimension that it cannot be ignored by anyone, least of all an organization that has become fastest growing religious assembly in the world, making its head, Pastor Enoch Adeboye, one of the 50 most influential human beings on earth at this time in history! I wondered for a while what the renowned man of God would have to say about sport and church. That made attending the service compelling.

Pastor Adeboye is a man I had never met in my life. I have seen him a few times on television and wondered how a man who is not your typical fiery preacher or orator, with such a humble and pious mien, could command such a mammoth congregation of followers in a country like Nigeria where the noisier you are the more you are listened to. I have read a lot about him though and looked forward to meeting him one day and unravelling the myth. That day came sooner I had thought.

When Pastor Adeboye
walked into the Church to deliver his sermon he was ushered in with some deeply spiritual worship songs. His presence lit up the beautiful but simple stage. When he opened his mouth to speak it was with a gentle mannerism and a soft voice that hardly rose above a whisper. I needed to strain my ears a little to hear his gentle and soothing voice above the whinnying fans and air-conditioning in the large and beautiful auditorium. He started with a prayer that dovetailed into a wonderful sermon that answered all my questions on sport and the church! It was all so simple, so brief, and yet so deep. He prayed that God would revive the glory of sport in our country and went down memory lane mentioning the names and sports achievements of some past and well renowned sportsmen and women in football, athletics, table tennis and boxing! He came down to the present and to the Super Eagles and prayed that the Eagles would soon shed their uncomplimentary toga of ‘Super Chickens!’ He prayed for God’s intervention, that good people be given the opportunity to provide good leadership for Nigerian Sports and that into the future the glory of Nigerian sport will be revived again from now onwards.

It was a great prayer session. And then he was done! Like a candle in the wind, he wrapped up the sermon almost as quickly as he started it. But served its purpose. All of us in sport that were in that congregation were supercharged by the prayers of Pastor Adeboye; all questions in my mind were answered. My mind was now clear. There was a greater calling on me even than I had thought before. It was a further confirmation that those of us standing now ‘alone’ on the podium of truth and justice in our sport are on the right course. With God on our side we are in the majority. Pastor Adeboye reinforced my conviction that there is no alternative to the truth in the redemption of Nigerian sports! I do not need any further confirmation than what happened last Sunday. It was not necessary that the entire country was at the service. It mattered that those that were ready to stand the test and confront the challenges were there, and have promised never to falter or let off until truth and justice prevail.

Thank you, Pastor Adeboye!
Ordinarily, some people see the Church as an ordinary building used for public Christian worship, that is going by the simple definition of the Oxford dictionary. Again this dictionary describes the Church as an institutionalized religion or as a political or social force.

We however know that the Church is not just the building but a body of people who come together to profess Christ. Therefore as people who are supposed to think and behave as Christ, they, the Church in this case, are supposed to do the things that Christ did while on earth, which includes but is not limited to, helping the needy.

From time immemorial, the Church has been involved in the political and social life of the people, providing leadership as well as amenities for the citizenry. Around the world, the Church continues to help the communities in which they operate in the areas of schools and sports.

No wonder, we have schools and sports bodies run by missionaries. In Nigeria for example, most schools prior to Independence were owned by Churches and children from such schools were not only taught how to read and write to pass exams but morals to make them good citizens.

Missionaries also were into sports, promoting different sports like football and built facilities for entertainment, leisure and competition.

When however, governments, like in Nigeria took over the running of schools and sports clubs from missionaries, things began to go askew and standards deteriorated. Morals were no longer preached and the value system changed. Rather than study, pupils and students in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions now take to cultism, and schools now churn out outlaws and criminals who continue to unleash terror on the society.

The Church in Nigeria are however taking it as a challenge to restore hope to the citizenry, by acting as alternate government as it were, to provide those things which should make life worth the while.

These could be found in the area of establishment schools that are run professionally.
with the fear of God to bring up morally upright children who will in turn take over the administration of the various sectors of the economy, providing good leadership for the benefit of all. Because the church is closer to the people at the grassroots, and sports being an activity that is best taught at tender ages, the church is better equipped to groom children not only as good citizens but also good sports men.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) for instance, has taken the lead in this regard with the organisation of a sports festival for its members spread around all part of Nigeria. This festival affords youth who otherwise would have found time for less rewarding pastimes. In addition to this festival the church has given approval for its different parishes to float football clubs, which has as its core young men drawn from the communities around them. Lately, the RCCG has introduced an annual boxing tournament for amateur boxers known as the Dove Golden Belt Boxing Tournament. This tournament is being jointly organised with the Lagos State Government. Apart from the Lagos State government which is partnering the RCCG in sports development through the Dove Golden Belt Boxing Tournament, the Athletics Federation of Nigeria, AFN has also towed the same line, introducing new programmes named after some prominent men of God in the country.

One of such programmes is the developmental Under-16 and Under-18 national athletics trials, aimed at discovering fresh talents and new track events. Starting in late March is the U-16 and U-18 youth championships named after Pastor D.K Olukoya, the General Overseer of the Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministry which will hold at the Yaba College of Technology in Lagos.

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Also, the AFN’s Golden League series which is expected to commence in April have been named after Bishop David Oyedepo of the Winners Chapel and the General Overseer of the RCCG, Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye.

The AFN stated recently that the leg of the Golden League named after Bishop Oyedepo will hold from May 6-7 in Kaduna while the fourth leg named after Pastor Adeboye will hold in Warri from May 20-21.

It is in this wise that the Dove Golden Belt Boxing tournament which is being organised as part of activities marking the 69th birthday of Pastor Adeboye is timely. It will not only help win souls for Christ but will help groom future boxing champions for the country at a time boxing, the first sport that brought international honour for Nigeria has taken a back seat among other sports.

With competitions like the Boxing Tournament in honour of Pastor Adeboye, children who hitherto would have been idle and used by the devil, will divert their energies to better things. Those who eventually cannot make it as boxers, would have been converted and become good Christians, spreading the gospel and creating better citizens both for the church and country.

(Patrick Omorodion, is the Sports Editor of Saturday/Sunday Vanguard Newspaper)
One of the biggest challenges facing sports today is the idea that it is sinful. Across the centuries societies have held that engaging in sports is not only frivolous but also a cardinal sin in that it robs the individual of time he ought to have spent on either deep reflection or on some noble pursuits.

While society took a dim view of it, the church was even more strident in its condemnation even going ahead to proscribe participation in games. In 1364 for example the Synod of the Diocese of Ely in England issued an order forbidding its priests from playing games. Elsewhere in England individuals were taken to court for engaging in sports on Sunday or any other holy day. It wasn’t until the middle of the 19th century (1857) following the publication of the novel, Tom Brown’s School Days by Thomas Hughes and the birth of the Muscular Christianity movement that sports began to be seen in a different light.

The Muscular Christianity pioneered by Hughes and Charles Kingsley emphasised virile Christian activism with what it considered the ‘ideal of vigorous masculinity’. For Hughes and Kingsley, physical strength with a strong pursuit of ideals in personal life was essential. The effect of Hughes’ and Kingsley’s movement was to encourage Christian participation in sports. Historians report that between 1863-1915, one quarter of all sports clubs in England were owned by churches.

In our own time, in Nigeria, the church has been actively involved in sports even though there still persists in this age the thinking that to participate in sports is to engage in sinful, immoral lifestyle. Thankfully, for us in the Redeemed Christian Church of God, we have a leader who understands the importance of sports both as a vehicle for the overall fitness of the individual and as platform for the spread of the good news of the Kingdom. Again and again, our General Overseer, Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye has stressed the need for ministers and children of God to take their health seriously noting that even though will take care of his children, they should not take anything for granted. We have been richly blessed to have as our father-in the Lord, an athlete, a coach and sports administrator. It is to our advantage as a church and to the world in general that the good Lord implanted in him...
a burning passion for sports. Well documented are his exploits in sports as a young man who during his days at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was actively engaged in boxing and volleyball and later as lecturer at the University of Lagos became coach of the school’s volleyball team. For me as a journalist, my fascination with Pastor Adeboye has been with his ceaseless interventions at critical moments in Nigerian sports. Not many Nigerians know for instance his ceaseless prayer for the Nigerian contingent at the celebrated Atlanta 1996 Olympic Games, our best performance so far at the quadrennial games. He had also done a similar thing two years earlier when Nigeria had its best outing today as a footballing nation winning the African Cup of Nations in 1994 and finishing as the fifth best team in the world after an impressive outing at its maiden World Cup appearance in the United States of America that same year.

It was as a result of these contributions that appreciative footballers, retired and active, met last year in conjunction with the Save Nigeria Sports Initiative (an NGO dedicated to the revival of Nigerian sports), conferred on him the award of Spiritual Pillar of Nigerian Sports. Responding to that award, which held at the Redemption Camp on October 1, 2010 while the Nigerian contingent was in Delhi, India for the Commonwealth Games, Pastor Adeboye predicted revival for Nigerian sports. His message seemed to have hit the right chord because our athletes despite have been poorly prepared for the games, returned to Nigeria having put up our second best ever performance at the event.

As a man who accurately measures God’s heartbeat, Pastor Adeboye is the quintessential evangelist and has deployed sports as medium. It was for this reason that he gave approval for the RCCG to float football teams, which would have two the two-pronged effect of providing employment opportunities for indigent youth and also win souls over for Christ.

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Nnamdi Okosie, is Sports Editor of NEXT Newspaper

A former Volleyball player and coach, Pastor Adeboye gives a demonstration on how the game is played at RCCG Bread of Life in the USA
What is the relationship between sport and religion?

I write only from my varied personal experiences. A staff of mine, Rotimi, in the mid-1990s resigned from my sports marketing company because the head of his church told his congregation that sport is demonic and that anyone involved in the business of promoting it in any way must harbour evil spirits. He further told me that his pastor insisted that sport was physically brutal and that all those involved are corrupt, tell lies, cheat to win, falsify documents to participate, and do several dishonourable things that could not have come from the throne of God’s grace!

Even if the pastor had some valid points the abuse of sport cannot be equated to the act itself. The incident gave me food for a lot of thought. I looked back through all the years of my career in football and could not recall one serious football match that I played in where the team did not spend several days before a match, and several minutes to the match in fervent prayer to God. I recalled how we took our prayer sessions very seriously, eyes shut and on bended knees, pleading with God to come to our side in the contest, to protect us from any injuries, to grant us his favour on the day and to give us victory. I recalled the extent our officials would go sometimes to seek divine intervention for victory before matches; how they would seek out the most ‘powerful’ prayers that God would never fail to answer! I recalled how we took the varied results at the end of every match and played ‘religion’ with them. Any loss would painfully attribute it to lack of enough faith, or too many sins amongst the players, or to not praying long and hard enough, or to not carrying out certain ‘instructions’ to the letter, and so on. The victories we would always
conveniently attribute to
the prayer warriors and the
efficacy of their ‘powerful’
prayers. I always would worry
how God looked down at us all,
and dealt with the issue of our
opponents who would also be
praying fervently as we died for
victory. How did God settle the
resultant spiritual ‘impasse’? I
often wondered!
Specifically, in 1994, so serious
was the issue of prayer band
fasting that the entire team in
the Super Eagles team that the
entire squad worshipped in a
Catholic Church in Carthage,
Tunisia, on the eve of one of
their most difficult matches en-
route to winning the African
Cup of Nations. They won
the championship. Eight years
later in 2002 some members
if the Super Eagles funded
the invitation of a ‘powerful’
pastor from America to the
team’s camp in Tokyo to
support the team’s effort to do
well at the Korea/Japan World
Cup. It ended disastrously as
the team did not win a single
match. What is God’s take
on all of these? How would
situations such as the examples
I have stated above be viewed
in Christendom? What are the
criteria God uses to decide the
result of matches? Does he
interfere at all?
My staff, Rotimi, had a point
when he resigned and I was
glad to let him go knowing
the spiritual trauma accepting
his myopic perception of sport
would do to my psyche, to my
work and to my life which are
really and truly all about sports!
I have always believed that
sports could only be one of the
special activities God created
for his own pleasure. Then, of
course, God had to create gifted
athletes, male and female, to
provide the entertainment and
excitement. That experience
He freely extended to the rest
of mankind to use or to abuse
according to their free will!
How could sport be considered
evil or demonic therefore?
I agree entirely that, several
times, teams have been
involved in unsavoury practices
that would not pass any
serious spiritual or religious
scrutiny. In such instances
those that may refer to such
practices as ‘demonic’ may find
justification. But generally,
the passion with which sport is
followed, sport’s unprecedented
global followership, sport’s
essence and what it achieves for
humanity in terms of physical
development, health and social
engagement benefits, its power
to influence change and drive
the ideals of peace, friendship,
social integration and economic
emancipation, and, of recent, its
use as a tool to eradicate hunger,
illiteracy, unemployment,
and several social vices in the
world, do not make it qualify
for spiritual condemnation.
Closer examination reveals that
sport can be beautiful, healthy,
fulfilling, empowering,
uplifting and a master at
teaching practical lessons in
ethics, good conduct, team
work, passion, discipline,
dedication, healthy competition,
winning valiantly and losing
honourably! These are all the
same virtues that underline the
essence of every true religion or
spiritual inclination. So, sport
and religion can find a very
happy medium indeed.

This article by Odegbami, a
former captain of the Green
Eagles, was culled from
Complete Sports
That Nigeria is gifted seems to have become an over-used cliché. However, nations now and then get gifts in the form of an individual who becomes a blessing to his and later generations not only in his country but internationally as well.

Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye is one such individual. It is trite to say he is a blessing to Nigeria. That is well known and quite appreciated.

For us in the sports sector, he is not only a gift but a gem. His conferment on October 1, 2010 as Spiritual Pillar of Nigerian Sports by a group of former and active Nigerian Sportsmen and the Save Nigeria Sports Initiative (SANSI), a body committed to the development of Nigerian sports, is eloquent testimony to the acknowledgement of his spiritual contributions to the growth of sports.

To have a spiritual head to an enterprise is the surest way to success and that is what Pastor Adeboye represents as the spiritual head of sports in Nigeria.

A post not by commission but design; for ‘Baba’ as he is fondly called used to be a boxer in his youth and the bible does make reference to running with a goal in mind, which sports administrators have failed to grasp till now. Apostle Paul said in 1st Corinthians Chapter 9, verse 26 that
“Thus I do not run aimlessly, I do fight as if I were SHADOWBOXING. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”

Shadow boxing is the ‘art’ of fighting a shadow – entirely unreal but the act of being the spiritual head means that ‘Baba’ has to get on his knees so that Nigeria’s sports will not be crippled by the crass negligence of its physical administrators. Knowing that things happen in the spiritual realm before manifesting in the physical gives us the belief that things have started getting better for sports in Nigeria with Papa at the real helm of affairs.

He will ensure that the goal to transform sports from a series of mundane events and activities into a multi-billion Naira enterprise sees the light of day. With the assuredness of a competent spiritual guide, then there is surely light at the end of the tunnel.

Philippians 3:14-16 tells us that, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”

1 Timothy 4:8 also adds that “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Being a fitness freak himself, Baba will help build the spiritual foundation upon which physical excellence can be built.

In a service in January, the General Overseer of The Redeemed Christian Church of God, he predicted better days ahead for sports in the country. For we know that the words that go forth do not go in vain. By faith we believe that every word spoken forth will come to pass – especially concerning sports in Nigeria.

Speaking at the special thanksgiving and prayer service for Nigerian Sports held at the Headquarters of the church on Redemption Way, Ebute-Meta, Pastor Lagos reprised the good old days for Nigerian sports. He then predicted that better days are ahead, Amen. He said as it was said of Jerusalem that, “Once upon a time Nigeria was a leading nation in sports, I remember a time when we use to have world boxing champions from this country, when we have one of the best footballers in the world; in the person of Thunder Balogun. But now, our team which is originally called Super Eagles is now been called Super Chickens by some people. I know if we cry unto God to intervene, things will change for the better and the glory of the country will be restored,” he said.

Now as the spiritual head of sports in the country, Baba will lead us back to being better than the good old days. But it will need dedication to prayer to give us real sports administrators who will be ready to lay aside their selfish interests and pursue the development and harnessing of talents altruistically.

The development of the body through sports should lead to a spiritual awakening in the talented youths that are being targeted. That is the prayer and wish of every sport loving man or woman – and that is why it is a thing of joy to have Pastor Adeboye as the high priest of this revival movement.

Though it might seem as empty to those who do not understand spiritual hierarchy in the scheme of things, those who understand know that Nigeria now has the spiritual guide that will lead sports back to its previously high pedestal.

Jide Alaka is on the Sports Desk of NEXT Newspaper
Consider these statements and which of them is right: “Money is the root of all evil” or ‘the love of money is the root of all evil’. The love of money might be termed or even seems bad but what we cannot deny is the need of it.

But what money are we talking about here? It is funding required either for education or for sporting activity. None of these can grow without money. Imagine what and where sports industry would be today without that little or at times mega funding put into it. What would it look like watching European football especially the premiership with player jersey and perimeter boards blank when it’s not the NPL (Nigerian Premier League), very awkward isn’t it.

For every aspect of sports today across the globe funding plays a very key and vital role in growing the super powers across the spectrum. Tiger Woods amassed so much wealth in his career through the ‘money’ he got and continues to get from corporate partners, who see partnering with him in his chosen field as an avenue to reach the lovers of the game and ‘lovers’ of the player. The funds provided is not just because they like the game or the player. It is because it also delivers for them some of their objective, which is why it is called sponsorship.

Today, sponsorship is seen as a major opportunity to create brand awareness both for the consumer market and within the business sector. There are two fundamental reasons why many markets and brands need to use sponsorship to reach their audience, and more so through sports sponsorship. At the moment, media fragmentation and clutter is shifting the focus from channels to platforms in order to reach the critical mass. Then its unique ability to add value to
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SPIRITUAL PILLAR ON NIGERIAN SPORTS
people’s consumption of their interest and passion, through this they build relationships based on positive brand encounter. So, with this then we cannot overlook the need for private funding (money) to build our sports, which would also deliver on their own (brands) bottom line (profit). Most corporate bodies in this part of the globe are yet to realize the great potential sponsorship has in building their brands and achieving patriotic dreams.

An example is the Athletics federation, in the past few years it’s been starved of sponsorship funds now we can see what is happening to our athletes today due to the lack of this ‘little’ thing, you can say it is little, but is it?. Now we no longer have top 100 metres runner any more. When would we get back to those glory days when you watch the 100 meters finals of the Olympic game and there is a Nigerian on the track on which ever lane.

For our sports to grow in Nigeria and be at par with other countries whether developing or developed we need the right sponsorship and not donation, which most corporate bodies do here.

A lot of the private and corporate organizations do so because the things to put in place before concluding on a sponsorship deal is lacking or even none-existent. Some of these you also cannot blame, but if well considered the right mix will surely deliver the right result. If not why should there be a fight between telecom giants on who sponsors the Nigerian Premiere League for instance.

Then let’s look at some of the things required for sponsorship spend to deliver and which would eventually help the field / sector in which the fund had been injected.

Sponsorship above all creates competitive advantage for you (brand) above others in same category, if well nurtured every good sponsorship provides meaningful mechanism to build great customer relations; these obviously advertising cannot achieve in isolation. It generally allows the sponsor the privilege to cut through media complexity which provides the means to reach consumers in an environment of their choice. Sponsorship helps in building the envisaged brand loyalty and trust.

The major issue sponsorship faces is lack of appropriate leveraging, the question then is why take up a sponsorship portfolio when the will and might to leverage is not available? Now isn’t it understood why most company executive just prefer to do donations rather than sponsor?

On the flip side, here are some of the reasons most sponsorships fail:

A poor understanding of the right due diligence on the property before signing the cheque. Lack of the understanding that the sponsorship has to be led by the consumers’ need, not the company’s. Another is insufficient resource / funds allocated to manage the sponsorship properly. For every sponsorship deal, there should be present a symbiotic relationship or connection. It is a matter of I scratch your back you scratch mine. From Kabba to Ajegunle to Gusau down to Sapele through Calabar, all over the cities of Nigeria, there are enormous talents that all they just require is that little funding and another “Thunder” Bolt is coming from Nigeria not Jamaica, just as another Olajuwon is there in the corner.

These would without a doubt grow corporate image over time.

Lastly, one of the reasons some sponsorships fail is that some refuse to accept that an event or talent takes time to build and grow but they unrealistically expect instant results.
I don’t have heroes. Certainly, I don’t have footballing ones: any heroism that footballers have committed has been tangential to the actual game. Harry Gregg, yes. Bryan Robson, no. But for all that, there are people in football whose success I’ve an emotional commitment to. I haven’t often found myself around these people: it’s not something I’ve ever sought. When I am, it’s uncomfortably disembodying and disassociating. There’s a mix on these occasions, of plain old nerves and the urge to say, don’t waste your time with me, get on with it, it matters… I last felt that way in late December, lunching with Simon Clifford in a restaurant’s private room beneath his offices in Leeds’ magnificent Victorian centre. It wasn’t an interview or anything like that – he’d offered me the chance to meet up and have a look around, and I was hardly going to turn down a chance to see UK football’s best hope from the inside. And my nerves went, anyway, when it turned out that we’d both taken the same message from the same Rocky 6 clip. Every time you meet someone “in football”, you come away with a stack of highly actionable stories that you could never possibly print. Clifford is a bibliophile, owner of one of the country’s most important collections of one of my favourite Victorian authors, and the stories were better than usual. I won’t pass them on. But I will pass on what else I learned.

I’ll also pass on what I learned from Clifford’s colleague Steve Nichol, now at Brazilian Soccer Schools and rated as one of the very best thinking coaches working in the UK today. One of the highlights of my day in Leeds was hearing Nichol analyse a recent Premiership match with the kind of succinctness and originality that only goes to confirm how little knowledge most of us who love the game actually have in Britain – and how much we need it. I tried to hide it from him, but I wasn’t keeping up, and felt ashamed. In no order, then – here’s what I learned at BSS:

The future might be about to arrive
Aiden White, at Brazilian Soccer Schools from age 7 until age 18, has broken through into the Leeds United first team. Aberdeen have five BSS graduates under the age of 21 in their squad, and there are another 650 young people training up under BSS auspices in Aberdeen alone. This is happening across the country. A lot of us have wondered what would happen to the British game if real training was available to young people.

Football is not just about raw energy
from the start. We might be about to find out. But:

BSS, Socatots and the Clifford philosophy are still developing

Clifford told me more than once that the existing setup of BSS and Socatots does not reflect the entirety of his thinking and that there are many more ideas awaiting execution than he and his team will have time for right now. There are further levels of attainment to be added at the top of the BSS scheme. Socatots, which is the great hope, starting young people off at the very beginning, hasn’t had time yet – it just hasn’t been around long enough – to generate its own cadre of graduates.

Local Socatots franchisees have signalled their belief – which I share – that appropriate training at that age level gives benefits far beyond football alone. Where football is concerned, the “new” ideology that we here more and more often now – that young people ought to be technically competent with the ball before moving on to game situations – has been baked into BSS and Socatots since the late nineties.

Player development

Some of what is still to come concerns fitness and focus. Steve Nichol posed the question – how do you prevent players stalling in their development after the age of 16? That is, how do you help them continue to grow once they are in the comparatively dead hands of Football League and Premiership clubs?

That’s not necessarily to criticize club academies, although the academies vary wildly in their quality, and are subject to the same coaching traditions that have held back British football in the past. But young players who make it into full contracts will do so on the back of a lot of hard work and sacrifice at an early age. The temptation to enjoy the immediate rewards is substantial and resisting it takes a level of maturity few people have at that stage in their lives. Mental and physical discipline Clifford and his team feel that the answers may come from boxing – a sport that calls on mental and physical discipline far beyond normal football training.

Football did originally associate itself with mental discipline. London social reformers like Quentin Hogg and Arnold Hills, saw football as a means of helping reintroduce the order to lives thrown into chaos by industrial change – mass demolition of working homes in the 1860s for Hogg, industrial depression, unrest and accidents for Hills.

But the problems posed by the modern game to young people are on another scale altogether: the human need for order and direction is obvious when survival is at stake. Less so when your choice is between extra skills training in cold weather or the chance to be the centre of female attention. Boxing and the other martial arts put discipline and conditioning onto a different plane – presenting them as the key to adulthood and the only source of peer esteem. Importing these values into football won’t be easy, but it’s surely not impossible.

Because anyone who has spent time around good young players and decent coaches will know what I refer to as the atmosphere of “high seriousness” that they bring to their endeavours. It’s a cultural survival, a hangover from the pre-1960s Apollonian British culture that has vanished from academia, government and policing.

In football, that high seriousness has to share space with what George Best inadvertently imported: fashion. Deep detachment: the universal application of satire and irony. The individual over the group – and groups, where they exist, are competitive, not cooperative. The priority given to sex – in direct contrast, here, to an older football tradition that evolved to deal with a world that had syphilis but no cure.

That high seriousness – friendly, but determined and implacable – was around me all day at the BSS offices. It made me realize – and think to myself out loud – they really are going to pull this off: they really are going to do this.

The place for thinkers in football

Mentors matter. Guidance matters. People, real or fictional, who guide and inspire – and irony. The individual over the group – and groups, where they exist, are competitive, not cooperative. The priority given to sex – in direct contrast, here, to an older football tradition that evolved to deal with a world that had syphilis but no cure.

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FROM THE THANKSGIVING SERVICE FOR NIGERIAN SPORTS

Mummy GO welcoming dignitaries at the Prayer and Thanksgiving Service

A cross section of people at the Prayer and Thanksgiving Service

Worshippers at the Prayer and Thanksgiving Service

Daddy GO delivering a sermon at the Prayer and Thanksgiving Service for Nigerian Sports which held at the RCCG National Headquarters in Ebute Metta, Lagos

Patrick Omorodion, Sports Editor Saturday Vanguard and Nnamdi Okosime, Sports Editor, NEXT Newspaper at the Thanksgiving Service

Former national sportsmen-Segun Odegbami, Tayo Oreweme and Peter Rufai at the Prayer and Thanksgiving Service for Nigerian Sports which held at the RCCG National Headquarters in Ebute Metta, Lagos
Chess is a sport that doesn’t enjoy a lot of publicity here in Nigeria basically because it’s not understood by a lot of people and in most cases it’s perceived to be a sport for lazy bums who are said to be idly watching a board with pieces just like the draft and Ludo players.

A better understanding of the game would result in the development of great minds and simplifying of the logic of the everyday endeavour that every individual is involved in. Chess is basically a game of logic presenting you with different twists and turns with each opponent and with each move that the individual makes. It’s an embodiment of dynamism bound by the same set of rules with the same amount of space and control at the beginning of the game.

The game begins for everyone just the same way life does with everyone born with equal tools. No one comes out of the womb with a pin so also a chess game. When you begin to play chess, you are also taught what to expect when you see a chess board; 32 light squares and 32 dark squares, 16 pieces a side and equal opportunities at the beginning of the game. Your progress, development and final position at the end of the game is usually a function of your assessment of the situation, ability to access to your opponent, ability to stay focused to stay focused to your ultimate goal even though you may have to be side tracked from time to time from your original plan in order to ensure that you get to your destination at the end of the day and in some cases environmental factors.

After you are introduced to the basics of chess, it is necessary for you to develop your style of play. This style in most cases is a reflection of your personality, the ideas you hold dear and the ideologies of the person who influences you the most. This is why in most cases people tend to play according to the styles of their coaches, friends, loathed opponent or particular individuals.

This simple fact has also led to the development of certain openings with infinite number of variations. These openings are sometimes passed down from mentor to protégé and sometimes people make the mistake of copying an opening without learning the logic behind it. This is problematic because sometimes when someone wins a game with an opening the person tends to use the opening and he has to re-educate himself to learn another opening. In a situation where an individual sees chess as it is, which is a tool to life; he understands that openings are just reflex reactions to some situations that are encountered. It is you who builds on this. For example, it’s when you get to Primary 6 that you are expected to write common entrance but
you are the one that determines whether you apply to a public school onto a private school. As a chess player, chess has been an interesting journey. I learned to play chess in junior secondary school with a wooden board and tiny pieces. The basic training which was by my father was the movement of all the pieces before the first game. By the time the game went round my father, siblings and myself, my younger sister beat him by the third game.

It was during the time when chess left the rug of our parlour to the laboratory tables in school that I realized that chess wasn’t draft or Ludo. It is actually what you make it to be. As a young chess player, it was on the pages of chess books that I was introduced to the concept of logic; this was courtesy of the school’s chess club. Gradually as I began to study the complex rudiments of the chess pieces, I began to understand the underlying reason behind the movements the aim and the reactions to expect. Chess like life never gives you the answer to everything but it prepares your mind to give everyone the benefit of the doubt, believing the very best and very worst of people while holding unto your personal belief, plan and goal. This attribute of chess has built and developed on holiness and righteous living isn’t taken lightly. This kind of foundation ensures that the bedrock of all discipline and training is understood by the child not just as a set of rules and regulations but some key points on which good morals and Godly character is formed thus building a good people and great nation from the cradle.

When you get to a chess board or tournament hall, nobody introduces himself by saying: “Hello opponent, I’m here to win, beat and humiliate you.” We are taught to be courteous and friendly with a handshake as the official start of any match. This helps develop our human relation skills because during the introductory training we are taught never to look down on any opponent, believe they are going to play their best and expect a run for your money. This is why the handshake at the beginning of the match goes beyond formalities. It registers in you a respect for another human life, brain, intelligence and endless potentials. This invariably makes you sit up because you’ll not make flimsy mistakes expecting your opponent not to see it. You’ll deliver your best because you are equally out to prove your intelligence.

Chess also helps you learn how to assess people because it is required that you are able to understand your opponent and his style of play to an extent. This is a very vital tool because no two individuals are the same. Even though he might be playing a particular opening that is similar to one that you have encountered or even played a thousand times, because he is a human being he is bound to have over a million ways of interpreting or executing each action and he’s expected to believe the same about you. This training is useful in developing strategic planning skills in an individual. This is very applicable in the trading sector of the economy and town planning because a study of the present population would help in forecasting future trends. This also helps in academic work because constant interaction with a teacher will help the student know or have an idea about the kind of teacher that he has. This will let the student know if the teacher likes pop quizzes, surprise tests, verbatim answers or basic summary and would help the child build the right study pattern. Sometimes computer software generate chess puzzles which are meant to touch on particular styles and techniques in chess. In most cases, these games are halfway. Whoever is interested in solving the puzzle has to start by getting into character. This involves assessing what is on board, what must have transpired in the game up until that point, the ideas behind the present position on board and fashioning a way of achieving the goal of the original player of that game. This is a tool useful in English summary and further mathematics especially because they are about specifics and if you understand the mindset of the initial player, you would most likely get to the same conclusion even though the steps may not be the same because of individual differences. Blitz is another way of playing chess where the chess clock is set on five minutes but on board or a win on the clock (i.e. when someone’s time is up) that is a valid win, although there are cases when the two are involved then win on board supersedes a win on the clock. Almost, nearly, and other time related excuses aren’t tolerated and this helps the player develop a sense of time consciousness especially where deadlines and targets are concerned. No shades of grey are allowed and this helps the player develop a sense of time management and regard for deadlines. This will ensure prompt return of assignments and project by helping the child develop a sense of time management as its only assignments that are done in time that can be submitted thus flushing “Nigerian Time” syndrome out of the younger generation.

Chess if better understood is a valuable tool that can be used to introduce Godly and sound ethnicities in the mind of young children in their formative years. This also instructs the way they perceive and adapt to their environment thus ensuring that they have sound development because their reasoning skills have been developed.

Brendan is a chess player based in Lagos.
Sports thrives in RCCG North America. There, members take sports seriously using it both as a means of keeping the body and mind healthy and also as a tool for soul winning. On a recent visit to America, Daddy GO shows them that he can still swing it, demonstrating to them how both Table Tennis and Volleyball should be played. We serve you images from that visit.
Photos by Olusegun Olusanya/Impressive Images
It is rather unfortunate to realize that most people have come to believe that it is normal to begin to lose our good health as we age. It is even more worrisome when we realize that many conventional health practitioners insinuate the same, and even impress it on patients that degenerative diseases are not only unavoidable as we age, but are lifelong diseases. Maybe in the past this was thought to be true, but many unutilized medical research findings reveal otherwise. It is true that a lifetime of poor eating habits and lifestyle choices tend to catch up with us in our latter years, but a careful review of the choices available to us in our earlier years could not only prevent the negative consequences on our health, but make full recovery possible even when the disease strike in our latter years. Middle age tends to shine the light on the dark imbalances that we have cultivated in our eating habits and lifestyle, to reveal the degenerative health issues. For the women, the symptoms of hot flashes, mood swings, insomnia, weight gain leading to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, arthritis and cancers of the breast, cervix and the colon, usually herald the arrival of this age bracket. The story is not too different with the men. They too are welcomed into that age which their own list of undesirable conditions, but instead of the hot flashes and breast cancer, prostrate cancer and erectile dysfunction top the list of similar most-unwanted-but-tragically-most common diseases. Let’s get it straight! Good or poor health is usually not an accident and has very little to do with the aging process. Rather it is the past years of junk and unrestricted dietary and lifestyle choices that should be held responsible. In our early years, in spite of our indulgences, devoid of any health considerations, our body-systems are able to go the extra mile to correct the imbalances we impose on it. However, as the years go by, the same body systems begin to fail in their bid to bail us out simply because we never appreciated what they were doing and therefore never
gave them tools with which to continue their thankless job of repair, to retain functionality. How many times do I get to hear the expression “something will kill someone someday”? Very true, we shall all die someday. However, I think it a disservice to the One who gave us our body to use to express His life here on earth that we have not taken time to properly care for that irreplaceable gift. For those who dare to care to listen, the foods we eat and the activities we choose will tip the scales in one direction or the other, when the time comes, often irrespective of your spirituality. Stress, inactivity, over activity, smoking, alcohol and eating a diet high in white sugar, fast food, white flour, red meat, refined carbohydrates, bad fats like Trans fats and saturated fats are sure recipe for soon-coming health disaster. As one female client of mine gripped by the fear of the consequences that her past years of indulgence entail, these are “the very sweet” portions that you advise us to eliminate. She was in her late sixties and being chastised with atherosclerosis; her very close ally in diet had just died suddenly of supposedly a heart attack following several pleadings from my patient asking that friend to follow here to where she gets such dietary and lifestyle advice.

**Aging not synonymous with disease**

We cannot emphasize it enough that age is not synonymous with disaster. It is very possible to age gracefully and to fully enjoy good health even unto the end of life. My father just passed on at the age of ninety-one. A little extra care could have made it longer; and that was not with arthritis or diabetes. Cancer was scared of him. Oh, you need to know how long I spent on the Yahoo home page a few days ago reading the few lines and looking at the photograph of a woman being celebrated as the oldest person in the world. Save for the moderately wrinkled skin, you could see no evidence of modern disease. She was celebrating her one hundred and fifteenth birthday. ‘But I don’t need to live that long; life will be boring then; most of my friends would have gone’ such are the comments of those who do not understand the essence of life. They have not thought about the joy of living and living healthy, the testimony that returns to the giver of life nor have they considered the wisdom of that age that could benefit the younger generation. I like to ask those rushing off this earth where they are running to; eternity is endless. You must get there someday! So why go to start it earlier than necessary. Would it not have been better to stay on this side longer and serve the purpose of our maker to the fullest; especially when He is not asking you to come home soon. It is never too late to start. The question is would you be made whole? This question does not apply to spiritual healing only. Physical, mental, psychological rejuvenation are also implied and possible. You don’t have to join those in lengthy arguments as to whether it is too late to start, especially when it comes to giving up the negative habits. Our maker has provided everything that pertains to life, physical or spiritual; it is left to you to seek them out and utilize them.

Don’t let anyone deceive you, disease is not a virtue, neither are health disorders a good testimony to cherish. More importantly, help is available. There is something you can do even from today. It is never too late to make that change. Knowledge is advancing but basic attitudes are fundamental. A whole lot of preventive measures abound; ignorance is no excuse. This column is here to have you informed. The only thing that remains is for you to answer that simple question; would you be made whole?

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*Asomugha is a medical practitioner based in Lagos*
February, 2011

Dear Beloved Daddy

Peace, grace and joy unlimited be multiplied on to you in Jesus name.

On behalf of the Board of Coordinators, the leadership and the entire membership of The Redeemed Christian Church of God - North America (RCCGNA), we join your other children worldwide to wish you a very happy birthday, God's continuous blessings and a fresh anointing upon you as you celebrate your 69th birthday this month of March. May God grant you many more years of useful service in His vineyard, in Jesus name, amen.

The RCCGNA - Directorate of Sports, North America, also congratulates you sir, on your recent award as the Spiritual Pillar of Sports in Nigeria. This is a well-deserved award considering your contributions to the development of sports at various levels, from the grass roots up, in the past and even now.

We are indeed very proud of you sir as a pace setter both in the spiritual and sports circles. By the grace of God, we trust that with this award a renewed spirit of evangelism will be born in our nation that will move beyond racial, religious and cultural barriers to win more souls into the kingdom of God, in Jesus name, amen.

God bless you sir.

Pastor James O. Fadele
Chairman – RCCGNA Board of Coordinators.
Boxing coach Jerry Okorodu (left), UK-based boxer Olusegun Ajose with Nigerian-based boxers Kenny Obareh and Kehinde Onasegun listen to Pastor Odesola.

Boxing coach David Adekunle, Marketer Bolaji Jubril, Boxing Coach Joe Mensah during the briefing.

Bankole (right) with Pastor Johnson Odesola, Personal Assistant to Pastor Enoch Adeboye (middle) and Prince Wale Oladunjoye, Senior Special Assistant to Governor Babatunde Fashola on Grassroots Sports.

Pastor Paul Bankole stressing a point at the briefing heralding the Dove Golden Glove Boxing Tournament.

Sports Editors at the briefing.

PHOTOS BY FEMI ADEBESIN-KUTI
The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) is not lacking in quality national and international athletes and women and even sports administrators. Of these athletes one of the most accomplished by any standard is table tennis player, Bose Kaffo. Kaffo, a self-effacing individual born 39 years ago, holds the distinction of being one of only three Nigerians to have competed at five Olympic Games (1992-2008), the others being sprinter Mary Onyali and table tennis player, Segun Toriola. This is definitely an impressive achievement when it is considered that by the end of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, only thirteen table tennis players worldwide had appeared at least five Olympic Games in the history of the global multi-sport event. Between the time she started active tennis and 2008, Kaffo, who is presently Kaffo, who is the Lagos State co-ordinator of table tennis, chalked up an impressive array of medals. At the All-Africa Games between 1987 and 2007 she amassed fifteen medals, seven of them gold in the singles and doubles event. She has the distinction of winning at least one medal at each Games. In Singles, she won gold...


Despite her achievements, Kaffo remains self-effacing. Rather than struck around like a peacock like athletes of her stature are wont to do, she has elected to quietly worship and serve God. On October 1 last year she joined other Nigerian sportsmen active and retired to confer the award of Spiritual Pillar of Nigerian Sports on Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye, the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God.

Apart from serving God, her passion is clearly table tennis. Speaking in Lagos in December at the end of an International Table Tennis federation (ITTF) coaching course, she said:

“I want to be seen as a good gospel of table tennis not for anything else. We all have to make ends meet somehow. If hard work is my means of doing that, nobody can stop me and nobody can attempt because it is for the glory of the sport and not for other things that I am sacrificing my career. I am sacrificing my life to make the sport great, so I don’t expect people to stop that good thing”.

Her quest for excellence in table tennis did not however blind her to the need to get an education. Between 1997 and 1999 Kaffo undertook a one-year French Proficiency course at the University of Grenoble, and then enrol at a private school to learn Information Technology. She learnt quickly:

“Within the first six months, I was able to read and write fluently in French, the last three months I used in polishing it up”.

Now, she considers French her second language noting that:

“I am more proficient in French than English language”.

She also did a two-year course in Sports Rehabilitation at the Middlesex University in the United Kingdom graduating with a Higher Diploma Certificate in Sports Rehabilitation and Injury Prevention.

She got her first degree at Southbank University in Sport Sciences, and received an M.sc in Sport Science Assessment and Support, with pathway in Clinical and Sport Bio Mechanics at Roehampton University.
SOCATOTS is the world’s first soccer specific physical play programme for children from six months to school age and is aimed at giving children their very first start with the ball. SOCATOTS was developed by Simon Clifford and is a truly unique programme, SOCATOTS uses soccer or football as its medium and of course children attending SOCATOTS will greatly develop their skills in this area. However SOCATOTS is about a great deal more than just developing a child’s affinity and control with the ball, it is about giving them a well-rounded start in their physical, social and educational development and developing the “whole child” Attending SOCATOTS classes has enormous benefits for young children and their parents, some of which are listed below:

• Development of cognitive skills
• Increased self confidence
• Improved social skills
• Enhanced muscle and bone development
• More body awareness and understanding of the benefits of exercise

The benefits of taking part in SOCATOTS goes far beyond just the physical and research shows that children who are physically active from a young age are more likely to concentrate better in the classroom. Add this to SOCATOTS focus on educational and social development as well as physical and soccer specific skills and you will see that SOCATOTS really does give a greater start to children.

SOCATOTS sessions feature full parental participation and the emphasis is always on fun and structured play and development throughout each of the 3 SOCATOTS phases: Phase 1 – Phase 2 – Phase 3.

All SOCATOTS equipment is especially designed for children to develop physical skills of agility, balance and co-ordination, from skittles, hoops and bean bags to balance boards and balls, which are specially designed by Mitre. Each activity is intended to improve motor skills and to do so in a fun, creative and safe way.

SOCATOTS sessions are led by staffs that have undergone comprehensive and regular SOCATOTS training courses. This training covers the theory and background behind the SOCATOTS philosophy as well as the core skills, exercises and games for all 3 phases. All SOCATOTS staffs have undergone full training in Child Protection, Health and Safety and possess the relevant First Aid qualifications for working with
young children. SOCATOTS is a registered body with the Criminal Records Bureau and all SOCATOTS staffs have successfully undergone enhanced Disclosure checks.

**Phase 1 – 6 months to walking**

These sessions will concentrate on the child’s lower limbs, helping them to develop flexibility in their feet and ankles. Sessions will also focus on helping children to walk and move, using appropriate exercises and fun activities.

Sessions in this phase will also begin to introduce early stages of mathematical development, personal and social development, communication, language and literacy as well as of course physical development, all in a fun, safe and creative environment. It is never too early to start learning about such areas and with SOCATOTS learning is always fun and progressive so children will continue to learn right through each phase of the programme.

Phase 1 is the very first stage in the development of SOCATOTS and sessions are shorter than in the other phases and focused on giving very young children the best possible start in physical and social development. The emphasis, as in all of the phases is on fun and helping children to develop positively in as many ways as possible. SOCATOTS music is used throughout sessions to help children learn to begin to move with rhythm.

**Phase 2 – walking to 2 years**

This class is designed for children who can walk confidently. With parental participation, children will start to learn footballing basics such as kicking and passing, turning and juggling.

Phase 2 follows on from Phase 1 and enhances the core SOCATOTS themes of development in mathematics, personal and social skills, physical and creative development as well as improving children’s abilities with communication, language and literacy.

In Phase 2, children learn to move in a range of ways with pleasure, confidence and control, they also begin to develop an awareness of space and group work and the idea of sharing is stressed. Improving balance and co-ordination, as in all 3 phases is an important aspect of any SOCATOTS session and more complex exercises and skills are introduced for both the upper and lower limbs.

Phase 3 introduces the child to control of the ball with all body parts, a variation of passes, dribbling movements and much more. SOCATOTS children who have gone through the earlier phases will be by the end of this stage fully confident with the ball, able to use both feet equally well and have excellent balance, co-ordination and movement skills as well as enhanced development in the areas of mathematics, colour recognition, literacy and language.

Creativity and fun are further stressed in this phase and children are encouraged to learn for themselves, but with the support and assistance of their parent if needed. All of the key components of SOCATOTS are present in this phase and the syllabus is focused on developing a wide range of physical, social and educational skills.

Children in Phase 3 are encouraged to learn to persevere in repeating actions when learning new skills and also to recognize the changes that happen to their bodies when they exercise. At the end of Phase 3, children are ready to carry on their physical development with Brazilian Soccer Schools for 5 to 18 year olds.

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*Article courtesy of the Brazilian Soccer Schools (www.icfds.com)*