

## Give the Environment a Sporting Chance

When we dig axes into the sides of cliffs, race boats across the oceans and disturb coral when we dive, we harm the natural world through sports. Even more damage is done by the space sports take up as more and more people watch and play them.

The spread of golf courses, for example, has spawned the Global Anti-Golf Movement, which calls for a moratorium on new development. Forests, mangroves and other natural habitats are destroyed to build the courses. The huge amounts of water needed to keep them verdant leave other areas dry: an 18-hole golf course uses an average of 2.4 million litres of water a day, yet there are many bright green ones in countries where water is scarce. The fertilizers and pesticides used on them do further damage.

Ski resorts also take their toll, as mountainsides are cleared and forests cut down to build runs. Skiers damage the flora on the slopes, and the noise and activity disturb animal life.

Building new stadiums, courses and tracks uses enormous amounts of energy and resources, and more are taken up in maintaining, heating, cooling and lighting them. Even transporting players and fans to sporting events causes pollution. Motor racing may be a particularly easy target, but the management of even seemingly harmless sports like football also needs to be concerned.

Yet many sports resorts and centres have been built with nature in mind, improving the land on which they stand. The Phuket Golf Club in Thailand was built on the site of a former tin mine, the Old Works Golf Course in Anaconda, United States, over a disused copper smelter. Both now attract wildlife. 'Heck, we've got herons in the water and deer eating the apples,' says Derf Soller, superintendent of the Old Works Golf Course. 'You didn't see that before.'

The Seven Bridges Ice Arena in Chicago, one of the largest in the United States, uses the waste heat and energy from refrigerating the ice rinks to heat and air-condition the huge building, cutting its energy bill in half. In Australia, the Sydney SuperDome sports centre is powered by a rooftop solar energy system, saving 85 tonnes of greenhouse gases per year.



PHOTOS: WWW.SADILI.COM

# LEARNING THROUGH SPORT

Sadili Oval – an award-winning sports camp for children from the slums around Nairobi, Kenya – is one of the first nature and sports camps set up by UNEP and the Global Sports Alliance. These give children the chance both to learn many sports with the proper equipment and training they would not ordinarily be able to obtain, and to become environmentally conscious and responsible.

The children take part in all kinds of activities – such as debating, drama and dance – that teach them valuable skills and build up their confidence. By discussing and looking for solutions to such environmental and social problems as waste, water, sanitation, pollution, health and HIV/AIDS, the young people become aware of things that are important in their community and can work to improve them as they grow older. Already they are hard at work cleaning up natural areas, planting trees and recycling.

The results are promising. Drug taking and truancy have decreased. Girls are performing better in school and staying there. Twenty-six children have reached the national tennis leagues. The Sadili Flames is the youngest team in the Premier Basketball League, and the camp has provided a number of national chess champions. And besides all this there is the fun the children are having, the lessons they are learning and the cleaner environment they are creating where they live!

# Kicking Hardship<sup>11</sup>

The Mathare Youth Sports Association project – started in 1987 to give children of the Mathare slums in Nairobi, Kenya, a chance to play football – now has 14,000 players in 1,008 teams.

The Mathare area – home to 700,000 people – is one of Africa's largest and poorest slums. It has many problems with drugs, prostitution, AIDS and gang violence – and is prone to disease brought on by polluted water supplies and by waste in the streets.



PHOTOS: MYSA

So, as at Sadili Oval, the young people become involved in helping themselves and others as well as playing sport.

In order to join the club the young people either have to coach younger children in football, or take part in environmental clean-ups. Since 1988, 25-30 teams of players have been cleaning up the slums on Saturdays, borrowing wheelbarrows, rakes and spades from the municipal council.

This helps build good relations between the children and the rest of their communities. And it earns them points towards their ranking in the football leagues.

The association has developed an HIV programme, raising awareness among young people about the disease that is ravaging Kenya. It works to feed, care for, and assist the release of, children in jail. It provides some school scholarships. And it gives training in photography, film and journalism so that the children, many of whom live in slums, can document and find pride in the stories of their lives.

All this means that the association has a pretty great reputation – and, more importantly, so do its members. They are known as 'the good kids', and they really do look as if they are kicking their way out of disease and hardship towards a better future.



## GIVING BACK

Kipchoge 'Kip' Keino – one of the all-time athletic greats – spends much of his time, energy and money looking after poor children in western Kenya.

Keino established Kenya's tradition of world-class runners, and is now on his country's National Olympic Committee. He set world records in the 3,000 and 5,000 metres in 1965, and won a gold and a silver medal in both the 1968 and 1972 Olympics.

But for more than three decades he and his wife, Phyllis, have been caring for homeless orphans in the city of Eldoret – a centre for high-altitude training – where he lives. 'They need love and shelter, a father and a mother – and a vision,' he told *Tunza*.

The couple now look after about 60 children in a family-like setting, though at times the total has touched 90. Keino has also established a school, which educates the orphans and other local children, and a farm to feed them and provide a surplus to sell to raise money.

Keino says that all this is a way of giving something back to the poor. 'I feel I came to this world with nothing, and I will leave with nothing,' he says. 'If I invest in those who need assistance, it is an achievement to live together and to let them live like human beings.'



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