

MESSAGE FROM ADRI HAMAEL

VISF Founder and President



The inspiring power of “the beautiful game”: How soccer changed my life!

I was born and raised in the Middle East. My Palestinian parents were forced to leave their homeland near the city of Ramallah, Palestine after the 1967 war between the Jewish and Arab armies. After the war, my family became displaced refugees in Jordan.

My father (an illiterate soldier) and my mother (an illiterate housewife) struggled to provide for me and my siblings. As a soldier in the Jordanian army, my father made less than \$30 a month. My mother refused to accept help from the United Nations Refugee Food Program, which made our life more challenging.

Then, I did not understand my mother’s position; however, that position shaped my entire life. By refusing to be victims and working hard, my parents inspired me to do the same. My illiterate parents taught me by example, that if you work and study hard anything is possible.

How soccer changed my life

I was six years old when I discovered my love for the beautiful game. Playing soccer gave me comfort, and much needed escape from life’s cruelty. My favorite hours of the day were spent playing soccer with my friends on a rundown gravel field. When I played soccer, I felt free! Soccer gave me hope, and allowed me to dream of better days to come.

I knew then that soccer was going to be my way out of poverty and oppression. I was determined to be the best I could be. I practiced religiously. I practiced at dawn, I practiced late at night. At times, I practiced hungry, wearing borrowed shoes with holes in them.

By the age of 16, my “bowlegged” condition became less challenging. Eventually, I was noticed during a school league game, and was selected to join an organized team. In less than two years, I was selected to join the premier division team. It was one of the happiest days of my life! I knew then that “the bowlegged refugee kid” was on his way to achieve his dream!

At 18, I was granted a college soccer scholarship which gave me a life changing opportunity to further my education, learn English, and eventually travel the world.

When I immigrated to Canada, I joined a soccer team. Soccer helped me to integrate myself in my new country and introduced me to so many people who shaped my Canadian life. Becoming a Canadian citizen was one of the proudest moments in my life!

It has been 32 years since I fell in love with the beautiful game, and soccer remains an important part of my life. Through soccer, I raised significant funding and awareness for youth impacted by war. Through the game that changed my life, I will continue to change hearts and minds. You CAN help. You CAN be part of something big and meaningful.

My friends: As football players and fans, we are familiar with the bonding power of the world’s most popular sport. Our passion for the game forces us to find commonality and to recognize each other’s humanity. As such, it is the ideal way to promote global peace and social change. Please, support us by entering a team, becoming a funding sponsor, or volunteering.

On behalf of all my staff and volunteers, thank you all for your support, and let the soccer games begin!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adri Hamael". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ADRI HAMAEL

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