

Give racism the red card

Lead-in

Discuss these questions in pairs:

- Are you a football fan? Why (not)? Why do you think football is such a popular sport around the world?
- Have you ever been to a football match? Can you describe what it was like?
- Have you seen or heard about any examples of racism in football?

Vocabulary

You are going to read a text about racism in football. Before you read, match the words (1–7) with the definitions (a–g) below:

1. **abuse**
2. **a ban**
3. **discrimination**
4. **diversity**
5. **ethnicity**
6. **a minority**
7. **racism**

- a. treating a person or group of people differently, especially because of their race, gender or sexuality
- b. official decision to not allow something
- c. unfair or violent treatment of others because they have a different ethnicity, skin colour or culture
- d. the fact of being different or varied; for example, having many different types of people in a group
- e. any small group in society that is different from the rest, for example because of their race, religion or beliefs
- f. rude, offensive or cruel words or behaviour towards another person
- g. the fact of belonging to a particular group of people with a shared history, culture and traditions

Before reading: Discussion

Discuss in pairs:

- If you had to move to a different country for your job/studies, what would you miss about home?
- What do you think would be difficult about moving to a new country as a professional footballer?
- What difficulties might football players from ethnic minorities face?

Reading

Read the article and match the titles to each paragraph (1–5).

- Not just men
- Punishment against racism
- Part of the game
- Anti-racist campaigns
- Speaking up against abuse

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1. _____

Many young football players move to live in new countries, where they have to learn a new language, try new food, get used to the weather and learn about the cultures around them. However, there is a very strong relationship between racism and football. We see racism in players, managers and fans, and despite increasing punishments, the problem continues. Players have said racism is a cultural thing: 'If every day you hear adults saying "Go back to your own country", then one day the child will say the same thing'.

2. _____

An increasing number of players are taking action against racism. There are now many legal cases against fans for abuse of players and their families. Some players like Patrice Evra (Manchester United) and Anton Ferdinand (Queens Park Rangers) have won cases against other players for abusive language and behaviour.

3. _____

Since 2004, stricter laws have included punishments of stadium bans and jail for racist behaviour from fans, including jail sentences for racial abuse online. Football clubs can also be given fines or be closed if their fans take part in racist behaviour. Despite the laws, there was a peak in football-related racial abuse between 2018 and 2023. 'Kick It Out' received a record 1,007 reports of discrimination during the 2022–23 football season.

4. _____

In April 2021, online abuse became so bad that all Premier League, English Football League and Women's Super League clubs collectively boycotted social media platforms for four days to protest. Organisations like 'Show Racism the Red Card' and 'Kick Racism Out of Football' work to end racism through educational resources and campaigns. Their goal is to celebrate the contributions of ethnic minorities and foreign players, provide ways for reporting hate crimes, and support survivors of abuse.

5. _____

Unfortunately, racism isn't just limited to the men's game. The England women's 2023 World Cup team lacked racial diversity, with only two women of colour in the 23-player squad. Additionally, former professional player Sapphire McIntosh reported that she faced discrimination due to her ethnicity, and no one in her team talked to her during her first year with the Leeds United youth teams.

Group discussion

Read the quotes and discussion questions and choose one discussion for your group. Try to think of at least four actions and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each action.

1. *If every day you hear adults saying 'Go back to your own country', then one day the kid will say the same thing.*

How can we encourage young people to challenge racism?

2. *Sapphire McIntosh reported that no one in her team talked to her during her first year with the Leeds United youth teams.*

What can Leeds club and other clubs do to be more inclusive?

3. *... jail sentences for racial abuse online.*

What can social media companies do to prevent racial abuse online?

4. *The England women's 2023 World Cup team lacked diversity.*

How can football leagues become more inclusive for trans and gender diverse youth?

Follow-up

Work in groups and create a poster with a slogan and logo for an anti-racism campaign for one of the following:

- **your school**
- **a local sports club**
- **a language school**
- **a social media app.**

Get ready to present your poster to your classmates.