

PEACE AND SPORT

THE MAGAZINE

JANUARY - JUNE 2026 | ISSUE #1

EL GRAN FONDITO

Sport through a child's eyes

EGAN BERNAL

The power of commitment

E1 SERIES

Racing toward
a sustainable future

MONACO UNITED FC

Monaco sets its sights
on women's football

POW-HER, BE GR8

GRACE GEYORO MORE THAN A FOOTBALLER



EDITORIAL



For nearly twenty years, we have been observing the world: its problems, its strengths, and its conflicts. And there has been no shortage of speeches since 2007... This period saw Nelson Mandela reminding us, during the 2010 World Cup, that **reconciliation can build a nation**. 196 countries join forces in Paris in 2015 in a **rare show of unity to protect the planet**. Colombia embarking on a **historic process in 2016 to try to end fifty years of armed conflict**. Although these events opened up new prospects for peace and international cooperation, Peace and Sport felt that more was needed.

We firmly believe that peace cannot be achieved solely through international summits. It is built on the playing field.

It is born in **the mind of a child who regains hope thanks to their team**. It is forged in the adversity of competition and nurtured through the deep respect felt for a coach. Peace is born when **a girl or a boy discovers their own strength and ability to take action**. Learning the tools that promote peace has its place in sport, in all its forms: on a football pitch in Bogotá or along the roads of the Tour de France.

Dear readers, I know you are already convinced, but let us remember once again that **sport is much more than performance or medals. It is a universal language**. A neutral space where differences fade away, where bonds can be forged, where trust is reborn because everyone is treated equally under the same rules. Sport brings to life decisive moments of communion, where **dialogue replaces mistrust** and **cooperation replaces confrontation**. You have seen it, as I have: sport can help build fairer, more inclusive, and more peaceful societies. But nothing happens automatically. It requires the commitment of many different actors. Because although it is a well-known saying, "**unity is strength**" remains as true as ever.

We collectively have to convince many others. So here is **our Magazine, a reflection of these convictions and a showcase for our message**. In these pages, you will find concrete stories from this twenty-year journey, faces and initiatives that prove that peace sometimes stumbles, often adapts, but **is built every day thanks to committed women and men in all four corners of the world**. Thanks also to athletes who, through their journeys, their exemplary behaviour, and their ability to inspire, are much more than champions. They are role models. Their voices carry weight, their commitments bring people together, and their actions open up new horizons. They are models for young people—young people who are learning to believe in their own power to bring about change.

Welcome to the first issue of Peace and Sport – The Magazine. Together, **let us continue to make sport a force that brings people together and drives the change** that the world needs now more than ever.

Joël Bouzou, OLY

*President and Founder
Peace and Sport*



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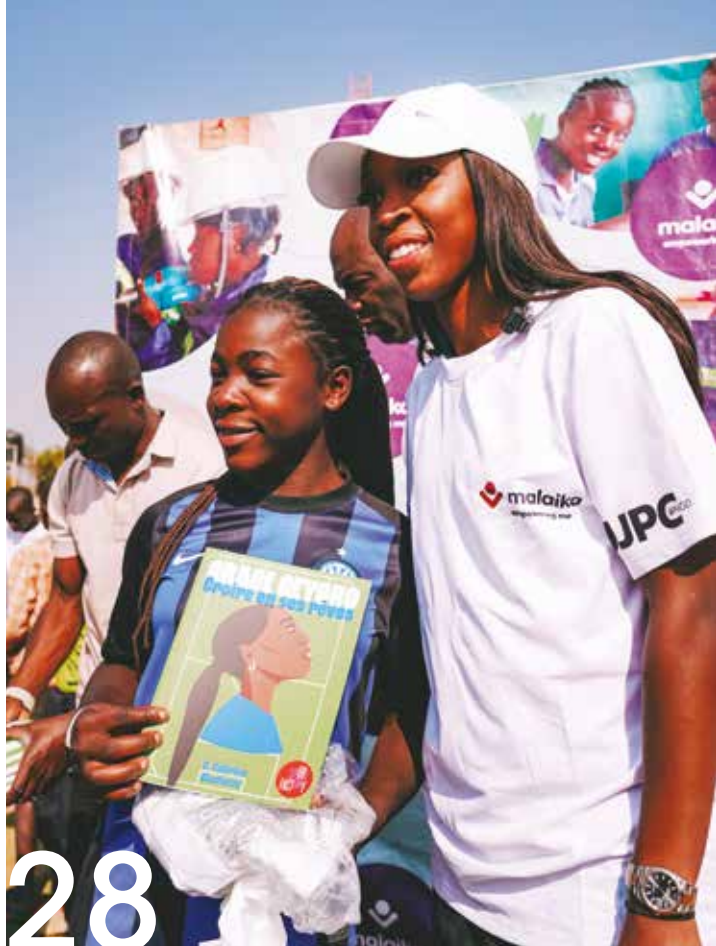
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From the Field

ERNESTO LUCENA

President - Peace and Sport LATAM Fundación

Can sport help shape Colombia's future?

Colombia is still struggling with its old demons. With the presidential election approaching on May 31, 2026, President Gustavo Petro (Alliance of Left-Wing Parties) has announced that he has had to take security measures after learning of alleged assassination threats. In February 2026, a Senator was kidnapped for several hours by drug traffickers.

These are just two examples among many illustrating the tense political context currently unfolding in this Latin American country, the world's leading producer of cocaine.

Ernesto Lucena is a lawyer, teacher, human rights defender and former Colombian Minister of Sport. He is now president of the Peace and Sport LATAM Fundación, which represents Peace and Sport in Latin America.

"To understand the Colombian context, it is important to recall the election of President Petro in 2022. The candidate's program gave hope to many Colombians who had long been unable to dream. Unfortunately, once in power, he failed to implement many of the public policies he had announced."

Many of his campaign promises have not been fulfilled, causing disappointment among a large part of the population. This has weakened the left-wing coalition, even though it remains competitive in the latest polls.

The return of the narco-state of the 1980s and 1990s?

This loss of confidence in political institutions, combined with a lack of resources and opportunities, is pushing some citizens toward drug trafficking.

"We still see many cases of human rights violations, as well as groups operating outside the law: drug traffickers, paramilitary groups... Violence has returned to levels we thought belonged to the past in Colombia."

However, between 2000 and 2010, successive governments waged an unprecedented campaign against guerrilla groups and drug trafficking. Many hectares of coca fields were eradicated.

Today, we are caught up in a culture of drug trafficking and easy money. I have visited 500 Colombian municipalities, and it is clear that this culture dominates and leaves young people with virtually no alternatives. This is not just a war on drugs. It has deeply permeated an entire society."

Sport, an Asset for Building Peace

In order to restore stability to society, stronger regulation is needed: controls on cocaine production, export and trafficking, as well as stronger measures to combat corruption. For Ernesto Lucena, the road ahead will be long.

"We will need the support of many multilateral organizations to develop specific projects, executed transparently and without corruption in our country. And we must use all the tools at our disposal to achieve peace: sport is a major asset."

Colombia's first-ever Minister of Sport is firmly convinced of this.

"It is an important lever in the fight against the mechanisms of violence. I have always defended sport as a tool for education and peace. When we respond to people's needs, they change: they become hopeful again and discover new possibilities for their future."

In Colombia, several peace education programs through sport are already showing promising results.

"We must support these programs. Because if they stop, the cycle of violence will resume."

"Today, we are caught up in a culture of drug trafficking and easy money. This culture dominates and leaves young people with virtually no alternatives. This is not just a war on drugs. It has deeply permeated an entire society."



In Focus – Portrait

EGAN BERNAL

The power of commitment

During the Gran Fondito in Zipaquirá, Peace and Sport chose to award the 2025 Champion for Peace Award to Egan Bernal. The Colombian cyclist, honored for his commitment to Sport for Peace, becomes the second South American to receive this distinction after Lionel Messi.



Egan Bernal receives the 2025 Champion for Peace of the Year award in front of his home crowd in Zipaquirá
© Amaury Lhermitte

Egan Bernal, born on January 13, 1997, in Zipaquirá, not far from Bogotá, is a true legend in his country. A professional cyclist since 2016, he divides his time between Monaco and his native Colombia.

In 2019, he achieved the greatest victory of his career — and one of the greatest sporting successes for Colombia — by winning the Tour de France. He became a true star in his country by accomplishing the feat of winning the world's most prestigious stage race, where so many of his compatriots had previously fallen short. Among them were some of the biggest names in Colombian cycling, including Nairo Quintana, Rigoberto Urán, Luis Herrera and Fabio Parra.

At just 22 years old, Egan Bernal became the first Latin American rider to parade in the yellow jersey on the Champs-Élysées. Two years later, he added a second Grand Tour to his list of achievements by winning the Giro d'Italia, further cementing his international reputation. Nicknamed the *"Niño de Oro"* ("Golden Boy") by Colombian media, he quickly became a standard-bearer for his country and a source of immense hope.

Eight months later, on January 24, 2022, Egan's life was turned upside down. Back in Colombia preparing for a new season, he was involved in a serious accident when he collided with a bus at more than 60 km/h.

The INEOS Grenadiers rider could have been left unable to walk again, or worse. Two years later, he told Eurosport: ***"That accident should have killed me instantly. I am alive, and I feel that life and God have given me a second chance."***

Despite this brutal interruption to his sporting career, the man who would later be known as "the resurrected one" showed remarkable determination and never lost hope of returning to the highest level.

However, the damage was severe: eight broken ribs, a spinal fracture and dislocation, fractures of the femur and kneecap, bilateral hemopneumothorax, and facial trauma.

After years of accumulating victories, the rider had to relearn everything and embark on a race against time to return to competition. Just seven months later, Egan Bernal achieved the remarkable feat of competing in a professional race again. In 2025, he became Colombian national champion and even won a stage in the prestigious Vuelta a España, with overall victory perhaps his next great ambition.

“That accident should have killed me instantly. I am alive, and I feel that life and God have given me a second chance.”



For the Colombian rider, the accident represented a second chance, both professionally and personally. Determined to become a socially engaged figure for his country, he chose to use his fame for a greater purpose.

A Champion for Peace

Alongside his partner María Fernanda, founder of Bee Peace, Egan Bernal seeks to bring people together and give back the love his country has shown him. Through her organization, María Fernanda works to support victims of internal conflicts. For his part, Egan uses sport to promote the values of peace, fostering a sense of community in a country marked by a long civil conflict, drug trafficking and crime.

In the middle of a demanding sporting season, the former Tour de France winner and his partner regularly travel between Monaco and Colombia to carry out their projects. It was during his annual festival, the Gran Fondito, that Peace and Sport decided to recognize the athlete for his commitment.

The Champion for Peace Award is presented each year to a sportsman or sportswoman who works to promote peace through sport. After Lionel Messi, the 29-year-old cyclist becomes the second South American athlete to receive the distinction. With characteristic humility, Egan Bernal reflected on the significance of the award: ***"It's very important to me. Monaco is the city where I currently live, and it connects me to Zipaquirá, my hometown. So, receiving this award in Zipaquirá is very moving. This award means a lot to me."***

Bringing together a collective of more than 100 top athletes committed to promoting peace through sport, the Champions for Peace initiative is one of the fundamental pillars of Peace and Sport.

Like the other Champions, the Colombian cyclist works to make sport a tool for dialogue and social cohesion. Role models, leaders and sources of inspiration for young people around the world, these ambassadors dedicate their time, influence and experience as athletes to projects that use sport to address social challenges.

Through his actions, Egan Bernal seeks to unite a country that remains deeply divided and marked by inequality. With presidential and legislative elections approaching, Colombia is experiencing a period of instability. Violence is once again on the rise, while the peace process is struggling to deliver lasting results.

By accepting the title of Champion for Peace 2025, Egan Bernal demonstrates his determination to use his fame to serve meaningful causes, fully embodying the vision of Peace and Sport.

In Focus - Report

EL GRAN FONDITO

Sport through a child's eyes

For its second edition, Gran Fondo El Origen x Egan is opening its doors to children for the first time. Alongside Bee Peace and Peace and Sport, cyclist Egan Bernal is stepping up his commitment to Colombian youth. Through this popular event, the former Tour de France winner is bringing an entire country together around a shared passion: sport.

It is not far from Bogotá, in the town of Zipaquirá, that cycling enthusiasts have gathered. Located more than 2,600 meters above sea level north of the capital, Zipaquirá is hosting more than 4,000 participants for the weekend. According to Egan Bernal, the event is also crucial for local tourism: **"There are 10,000 people here this weekend. Since 5 a.m. this morning, shops and hotels have been open and are taking advantage of the excitement. For the past two days, there has been much more tourism in the city than usual, which is a good thing."**

For the second year in a row, the winner of the 2019 Tour de France is organizing the Gran Fondo, a cyclosporive race that celebrates his discipline and allows his fans to ride alongside him.

Accompanied by many other professionals - including Nairo Quintana, Rigoberto Urán, Santiago Buitrago, Harold Tejada and Óscar Sevilla - the Zipaquirá native offers two circuits so that amateur riders can share their passion with their idols. The most ambitious cyclists will cover 144 kilometers, while the more casual riders can opt for the 107-kilometer route. Both courses trace the origins of Colombia's greatest cyclist.

Egan knows these roads by heart, having ridden them since the age of eight, when his father passed on his passion for cycling. María Fernanda is deeply involved in this annual competition. Alongside Bee Peace, the company she founded, the cyclist's partner is committed to promoting peace through sport among Colombians. **"The love Colombians have for us is the most beautiful gift we could receive. We are constantly supported everywhere, even in Europe, where they always turn out in large numbers. We owe it to them to be grateful. Egan and I want to give that love back. We want to help as much as we can. If we can change things through cycling, we will do it. It's important."**

This year, a race has been organized for children. With the support of Bee Peace and Peace and Sport, the Gran Fondito is aimed at young people aged 3 to 12 and seeks to introduce



them to cycling while passing on the passion for the sport. For Egan, sport is above all a vehicle for transmitting values: **"Especially to children. They are our future and can help us become better people. I think sport is very inclusive and helps prevent people from making bad decisions."**

At 8:30 a.m., the children eagerly gather on the athletics track at the Héctor "El Zipa" González Stadium. The day before, Bee Peace and the foundations of Egan Bernal and Esteban Chaves prepared an agility course for them. For María Fernanda, the aim of the Gran Fondito is to show children how Egan began cycling. **"Families need support to know how to train their children, because it's a sport that helps you grow and develop. With Bee Peace, Peace and Sport, and the Bernal and Chaves foundations, a very important alliance for us, this obstacle course is a wonderful experience for the children and part of their learning process."**

More than a hundred families are present, arriving one after another after passing under an arch welcoming them to **"Colombia's first cycling festival."** Once dressed in their cycling outfits and mounted on their bikes, the children smile proudly in front of a photo of Egan Bernal. The atmosphere is joyful.

In addition to the agility course, numerous stands offering products and activities are set up around the brand-new stadium. At the center, a large stage hosts concerts throughout the day. With food courts and inflatable games for children, a small village has been created from scratch for this Sunday celebration dedicated to sport and cycling.

María Fernanda has been working on this weekend for a year. **"It's important for young people to learn this sport, which is one of the most popular in Colombia."** After football, which is almost a religion in Colombia, cycling is the country's second most popular sport. Beyond its popularity as a discipline, cycling is also a common means of transport. Bogotá, for example, has more than 600 kilometers of cycle paths, used by over 900,000 residents every day.

Alongside their families and educators, the children gradually discover the obstacle course. Soon, a veritable parade on two wheels takes shape. After a few warm-up laps, cheered on by their parents, the children line up for a competition combining speed and agility.

A competition phase is organized to give the children a taste of the adrenaline that Egan Bernal experiences in the world's biggest races. Each child takes turns completing the circuit before being scored and ranked according to their age category.

Families quickly get caught up in the excitement. The children give it their all, and at the finish line the applause and congratulations from their parents bring smiles of pride.

Finally, each participant, regardless of performance, receives a medal and a T-shirt from Peace and Sport. For many, it is their first medal, and for some perhaps the first of many to come.

But beyond performance, the main aim of the Gran Fondito is to show that every effort is an achievement in itself that deserves recognition.

After a calm moment supervised by Peace and Sport, the festivities continue with inflatable games and music echoing throughout the stadium.

In the early afternoon, a ceremony takes place on the main stage. The best-performing children are invited onto the podium. Each age category has its own podium, gifts and new medals. The cycling stars take turns presenting the awards in front of a jubilant crowd generous with its applause. The children seize the opportunity to capture this special moment with their idols, whom they usually only see on television during the world's biggest races.

Proud of the event's success, María Fernanda cannot hide her emotion: **"I'm overjoyed to see parents and children so happy, enjoying the concerts and activities. It's fantastic and very motivating for the future."** The day's objective has been achieved: spreading joy and passion through sport.

“Children are our future and can help us become better people. I think sport is very inclusive and helps prevent people from making bad decisions.”



In Focus - Portfolio

EL GRAN FONDITO



Two days before the first Gran Fondito, organized by the Egan Bernal Foundation, the Esteban Chaves Foundation, Bee Peace and Peace and Sport, Egan Bernal held a signing session in the Colombian capital, Bogotá. A massive crowd gathered to witness an unforgettable moment.



The children discovered the obstacle course, supervised by educators during the warm-up.

Then it was time for the race to begin. Each child waited their turn to cross the starting line. Once their number was called, they had to complete the course as quickly as possible while making as few mistakes as they could.

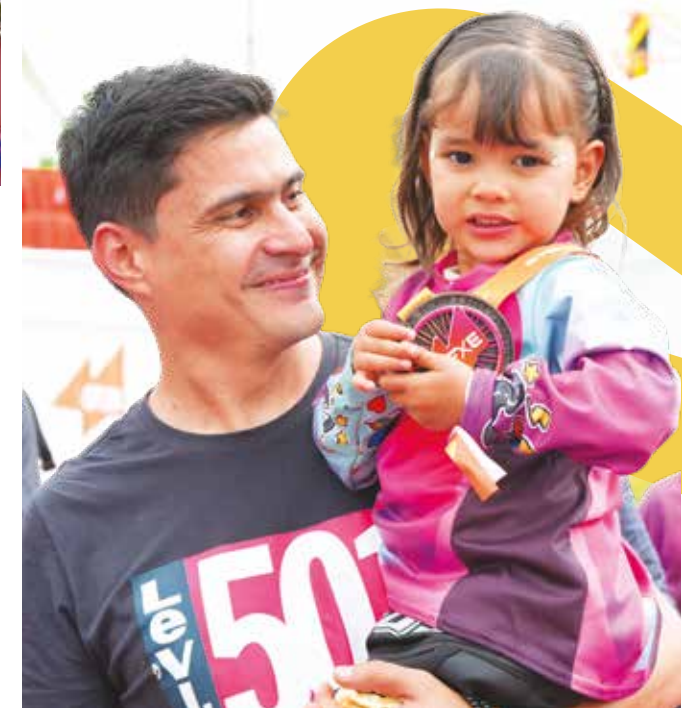


Two different courses were set up. The difficulty was adapted to the age of the participants.



After giving it their all, it was time to rest. The children proudly posed with their medals, sharing a joyful moment — even with their competitors.

At the finish line, each participant received a medal to reward their efforts. Beaming parents rushed to congratulate their children.



Voices from the Field

GERSON FLOREZ

Building peace in Colombia

In Usme, on the mountainous outskirts of Bogotá, Gerson Flórez works with young people to build a peaceful and inclusive community. The founder of the NGO Corporación Constructors of Peace International (COP Colombia) uses sport to create the conditions for peace in his district and his country. Supported by Peace and Sport, this project aims to steer young people away from delinquency and help them integrate into society.

“Peace education and sports activities are essential for fostering resilience and helping young people manage conflict in a non-violent way.”



Located in the south of the capital, the district of Usme, with a population of more than 500,000, is one of the most vulnerable areas in Colombia. Before the end of the Colombian armed conflict, when the peace agreements were signed in 2016 between the FARC and the government, Usme was a strategic corridor for paramilitary and rebel groups. Heavily affected by the scourges of drugs, prostitution and violence, Bogotá's fifth district still carries an image of insecurity among taxi drivers and many officials in the capital.

Gerson grew up among the stalls of street vendors, sipping tinto, a sweet, hot black coffee. At the age of 11, he returned from a trip to learn of the death of two children who had been killed by an anti-personnel mine. Just a few days earlier, he had been playing football on the same pitch. **"This news shocked me deeply. It hurt me a lot and, at the same time, it motivated me. It became a challenge. I told myself that I had to do something."** Gerson Florez then became a spokesperson for the often-overlooked victims of landmines and a fervent defender of children's rights in the face of paramilitary groups. A year later, in 1998, he received the Youth Prize for Peace and Tolerance after participating in the National Peace Council in Colombia. In 2000, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his commitment.

His non-governmental organization was founded in August 2008 to promote a socio-sporting project around which a football academy was created. It was a real breath of fresh air for Usme, an isolated area located more than an hour from central Bogotá and lacking adequate infrastructure. The La Aurora municipal stadium is the only stadium in Usme, shared by its 500,000 inhabitants as best they can. Thousands of children pass through the stadium every day from 6:30 a.m. Among them, every Saturday and Sunday morning, are the boys and girls of COP, aged between 5 and 18, who gather there to train.

For the founder of COP Colombia, sport is a powerful way to support young people and offer them new perspectives. **"In Usme, there is a lot of violence. Children and young people face enormous challenges. It is difficult to find work and access education. Many can fall into trafficking or delinquency. Usme is one of the areas with the least sports infrastructure. That is why, through our association, we decided to build a program around sport for children. The aim is to train them through sport and give them the tools they need for life and for the future."**

A Sustainable Future Thanks to the Peacemakers Project

En 2021, COP Colombia was selected to take part in the Peacemakers Project, an international mentoring program initiated by Peace and Sport. During its training sessions, the Colombian NGO implemented a specific sports methodology designed to promote education, social inclusion, gender equality, empowerment and openness to the world.

For Gerson, the partnership with Peace and Sport has helped strengthen the work already carried out by COP while integrating other Colombian organizations into the project.

"It's not just about competition or training high-level athletes," says Gerson, **"but also an excellent way to encourage, strengthen and develop essential life skills, interpersonal abilities and social skills, and, of course, to train the future leaders of our communities."**

The implementation of the Peace and Sport methodology by COP Colombia has enabled the training of many educators. After validating the three cycles of the Peace Through Sport Methodology during a two-year pilot phase, five of them were able to pass on their expertise to the wider community.

As part of an expansion program adopted by popular vote within the Usme community, forty-two additional educators are now being trained. This development has allowed COP Colombia to become more autonomous in its work of transmitting the values of peace through sport.

The methodology has also helped educators adopt less authoritarian and more constructive approaches to coaching children. As a result, Gerson has observed **"significant behavioural changes in many boys and girls who were once introverted and did not dare to express themselves freely, but now do so."**

Marlon is one of the first peace educators trained as part of the Peacemakers Project. According to him, the methodology has helped him develop new skills that allow him to contribute to building a more peaceful community.

"The methodology aims to ensure that children enjoy themselves, encourage them to respect each other and share with other participants."

Aware of the importance of sport in transmitting these values, Marlon adds: **"Creating this dynamic allows us to consolidate many positive aspects for the community, for the athletes, for us as coaches and, of course, for the children."**

Thanks to the COP Colombia academy, children already benefit from four hours of training each weekend, offering relief to parents who are often overwhelmed. Families nevertheless play an essential role, whether by accompanying their children to competitions or simply showing their support for the project. This engagement did not happen overnight. It is the result of the project's growing visibility, particularly through its annual events such as the Friendship Games, which bring together numerous organizations and even international champions. More importantly, it reflects the educational work carried out with parents to explain the objectives of the Peacemakers Project. As Gerson explains: **"Sport brings people together. It is not only for competitors; it benefits families and the wider community."** In his fight for peace, Gerson is supported by much of his own family. His sister, for example, serves as president of the organization. Even the family home houses the organization's sports equipment as well as a small community grocery store. This spirit is the very essence of COP Colombia. Camilo, a former beneficiary of the association who spent several years in the academy, explains: **"What I appreciate here is the importance given to family ties. We try to create a real family for all the children, even for the peace animators and teachers."** Trained during the Peacemakers Project, the 20-year-old Colombian is now an educator within the organization.

With a long-standing commitment to peace, Gerson and Peace and Sport found in COP Colombia fertile ground for implementing the Peacemakers Project and its methodology. Thanks to this partnership, the district of Usme has seen new leaders emerge, passing on the values of peace to younger generations. Proud of the tangible impact he has seen on the ground, Gerson is already exploring new opportunities for development so that he can continue working for his community and local progress. **"We can take a much broader view of sport and encourage children and young people not only to become top athletes but also to discover other disciplines and professions related to sport that they can benefit from."**



Expert

PEACEMAKERS PROJECT

Five years to transform sport into a force for peace

A 400-page report. And yet, it is only a summary of five years of work carried out by the Peace and Sport teams as part of the Peacemakers Project.

“I don’t hesitate to talk about failures when necessary. As in team sports, it is by accepting reality and working hard that we can improve.”



“We know that only those involved in Sport for Development and Peace will take the time to read a part of this report,” admits Ludovic Dau, Director of Sports and Programs at Peace and Sport.

However, these 400 pages demonstrate how accumulated experience can help move from isolated actions to structured, reproducible approaches adapted to each local context.

What is the Peacemakers Project?

Who are these Peacemakers?

“This program originated during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

It quickly became a learning ground for Ludovic, for Peace and Sport, and for associations in several countries (Colombia, India, Burundi, Togo and Morocco) that chose to embark on the adventure.

Following numerous exchanges with actors in the field and athletes, the objective was refined: to offer comprehensive support to develop and strengthen initiatives that promote the

values of inclusion, equity and peace through sport.

There were many challenges. It was necessary to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of such a project in order to structure effective coordination, create relevant opportunities for dialogue and design tools adapted to a variety of issues, often in particularly vulnerable areas.

Creating a Real Toolbox

As Rome was not built in a day, the Peacemakers Project’s approach has been developed gradually. Today, it has resulted in the design of a set of concrete tools that can be used directly in the field. ***“We have built our approach and tools based on the priority needs identified by our partners in the field,”*** confirms Ludovic Dau.

This collaborative work has led to the creation of educational, training and advocacy tools. On the educational front, children take part in specific warm-up activities designed to promote self-awareness and awareness of others.

“Peace matches” are also organized, including silent matches, to teach children to communicate in different ways and to better understand disability.

All of the exercises are based on three fundamental principles: learning to accept oneself, learning to accept others, and, finally, learning to live together.

To sow these seeds in a sustainable way, training peace educators is essential. They are the first to relay this dynamic in the field.

The Peace and Sport teams are the central link between the Monegasque offices and the reality on the ground.

The Peacemakers Project has been rolled out over five years: five years of support, field missions, and the structuring of international organizations.

“Human development is a tribute to patience. We face the demands of everyday life, but our actions will only produce results in the long term.”

In certain sensitive and politically unstable areas, links with local structures can be broken.

“I don’t hesitate to talk about failures when necessary. As in team sports, it is by accepting reality and working hard that we can progress.”

However, this improve, which was born from an idea in the midst of a health crisis, is now a real achievement. The foundations have been laid; now we need to amplify its impact.

“We have learned a great deal and have had a real impact on certain communities. Today, we have a clearer vision of the needs of communities and the expectations of major international bodies. Peace and Sport’s role will continue to evolve in the coming years, particularly in terms of certifying best practices. Our goal is to push boundaries so that the wonderful tool that is sport is accessible to all, and used increasingly as an educational lever, particularly in the most vulnerable areas.”



Champion of the Year

GRACE GEYORO

“This award motivates me even more to keep going”



“ Meeting H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco was simply exceptional. It was one of the most wonderful moments of my life. I didn’t expect such kindness and simplicity, or to be so warmly welcomed. I will always remember that meeting. Receiving this trophy is a source of great pride, first for what it represents but also for the motivation it gives me for the future. It is a wonderful reward and I was very honored to receive it.

Last December, Grace Geyoro was named Champion for Peace 2025 by Peace and Sport. This distinction recognizes both her sporting achievements and her commitment to supporting vulnerable communities, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo, her country of birth.

A midfielder for the French national team with more than 100 caps for Les Bleues, the 28-year-old now plays for London City Lionesses. A leading figure in women’s football, she has made a name for herself through her talent and a historic transfer. French champion in 2021 and a three-time winner of the Coupe de France with her formative club, she enjoys international recognition. Deeply attached to her roots, Grace Geyoro looks back on a memorable year, punctuated by this award.

Peace and Sport: You had an eventful year in 2025. How would you describe it?

Grace Geyoro : Quite incredible. There were so many positive moments for me. I had many projects, both outside of sport, symbolized by the 2025 Champion for Peace trophy awarded by Peace and Sport, and in my career with my change of club. Signing in London meant starting a new life. It was a very emotional year.

P&S : How are you settling in England and at your new club?

GG : I received a very warm welcome from my teammates, the coach, the staff and everyone at the club. That made it much easier for me to settle here in London. I’ve managed to adapt to the team and the city, even though it’s a new language and a new culture, especially the food [laughs], which was the hardest part. But luckily, we have a chef at the club.

P&S : How did you feel when you received the 2025 Champion for Peace Award from H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco?

GG : It was the first time I had met him and even the first time I had been to Monaco. I was pleasantly surprised by the city: it’s magnificent. Meeting H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco was simply exceptional. It was one of the most wonderful moments of my life. I didn’t expect such kindness and simplicity, or to be so warmly welcomed. I will always remember that meeting. Receiving this trophy is a source of great pride, first for what it represents but also for the motivation it gives me for the future. It is a wonderful reward and I was very honored to receive it.

P&S : Is it an additional source of motivation?

GG : Yes, it motivates me to continue and strengthen my actions. I have just created my association, Pow-Her, Be Gr8, so there is still a lot to develop and put in place. This is already a first step. This trophy means a lot to me. Even before creating my association, I was already involved in humanitarian work, through the Geyoro Tour in France and through different initiatives in Congo with children in need. The association has simply provided a structure for all of this, and this award motivates me even more to keep going.

P&S: On March 8, 2025, International Women’s Rights Day, you joined the Champions for Peace club. Does that symbol encourage you to do even more for women’s rights?

GG : I am a woman, so it is obviously a date that is very important to me. Of course, I want to take action to defend our rights. Joining this club on that day was a real symbol for me and made me even more proud. I know that I am still in the middle of my career, and it is not always easy to find the time to organize everything. There is a lot to do. I try to take action whenever I can and do as much as possible. When I go back to my home country, I try to take time to rest but also to work on new initiatives and move projects forward.

P&S : Isn’t it difficult to combine being a professional athlete with running an association?

GG : It’s not easy, but I really try to organize myself so that I can manage both. By organization, I mean deciding which days I can travel and work on projects and which days I need to rest. It’s up to me to optimize my time and do my best to make the most of it. Being supported by Peace and Sport and JJPC – *Je Joue pour le Congo* is a real opportunity because they guide me and follow my projects closely. With my schedule, I can’t do it alone. It gives me peace of mind and really allows me to develop future projects without putting my sporting career on hold.



Champion of the Year

POW-HER, BE GR8 : GRACE GEYORO, BEYOND THE PITCH

Awarded the title of Champion of Peace 2025 by Peace and Sport, Grace Geyoro has been recognized for both her sporting achievements and her commitment to supporting vulnerable communities. The French international, who now plays for London City Lionesses, has been involved in charitable work for several years. In 2025, she took a decisive step forward by founding her association, Pow-Her, Be Gr8, with the ambition of using sport as a tool for education, social cohesion and inclusion. Supported by Peace and Sport and JJPC – *Je Joue pour le Congo*, she has given her convictions a new structure and broader scope.

At the age of 28, the midfielder is entering a new phase of her career. Based in London to take on a new sporting challenge, she is also launching a project that is particularly close to her heart. The name of her association sounds like a call to determination: literally “the power to be great.” By including the pronoun “Her,” the project explicitly places women at the center of its mission. The number “8” refers to her iconic jersey number, worn both with the French national team and Paris Saint-Germain, the club where she played for more than a decade.

Although Pow-Her, Be Gr8 was officially launched in 2025, Grace Geyoro’s commitment is nothing new. Before the association was created, she was already leading personal initiatives through the Geyoro Tour, reaching out to amateur football to promote young talent, particularly young girls who find in sport a space for expression and empowerment. At the same time, she regularly visited the Democratic Republic of Congo, her country of birth, to support children facing complex social realities. The creation of the association reflects her desire to structure these actions and give them coherence and continuity.

“With my association, we seek to promote sport, culture and literature through my comic book, which I launched in May 2025,” she explains. Through these different tools, the objective is clear: **“With all these means, the aim is to promote social and professional integration for people in difficulty.”** The association focuses primarily on young people and advocates access to sport as a driver of social and personal empowerment. This vision resonates closely with that of Peace and Sport.

On the field, the first initiatives are gradually being rolled out through sports programs, educational projects and local support. Pow-Her, Be Gr8 aims to lay the foundations for sustainable initiatives designed to meet local needs.



This commitment also involves concrete actions, as Grace explains: **“I also visited an orphanage in December to bring food and essential supplies. We distribute food donations, clothing, books: everything they need. These are simple things we can do.”**

Still in the process of being structured, Pow-Her, Be Gr8, together with Peace and Sport, conducted an exploratory mission between Kinshasa and Lubumbashi to identify local needs and initiate sustainable partnerships. On this occasion, Grace Geyoro discovered the Malaika institution, which provides free education and access to sport for hundreds of young girls.

“I went to Lubumbashi to visit a school called Malaika. This school focuses on supporting young girls who face difficulties developing as women, while also giving them access to education and sport, particularly football.”

It was a defining experience that helped shape the future direction of her commitment.

In the DRC, she understood the importance of developing projects centered on education, social cohesion and inclusion, in a context where sports infrastructure remains limited.

“I have travelled a lot. I was born in Congo, but I left for France at the age of two. It was when I turned 20 that I realized I wanted to help my country of origin. Obviously, my fame made things easier.”

Aware that she has benefited from decisive opportunities, she now wants to pass on what she has learned. In this dynamic, she also relies on locally engaged organizations, such as *Je Joue pour le Congo* (JJPC), which supports Congolese athletes in their social and humanitarian initiatives.

Peace and Sport’s support provides her with a structured framework.

“It gives me security because they are used to working on these projects and dealing with the realities on the ground. Their support and follow-up are essential for top-level athletes.”

Highly committed to her career and her family life, Grace Geyoro must juggle a demanding schedule.

“I can’t do it alone, especially with my schedule as a top-level athlete. With Peace and Sport and JJPC, we are preparing future projects together. They are there to exchange ideas and offer advice. It’s a support I can rely on.”

Pow-Her, Be Gr8 is still a young organization, but the ambition is clear. Among the initiatives being considered are the construction of a football pitch to provide free access to sport, hosting girls’ teams and even creating an academy. All of these projects reflect a desire to pass on knowledge and empower others.

This ambition is also reflected in her comic book, *Croire en ses rêves* (Believe in Your Dreams), which recounts her journey and encourages young people to believe in their abilities. Through sport, culture and education, Grace Geyoro demonstrates a commitment that goes far beyond the pitch. It is a journey in which performance and responsibility now go hand in hand.

In Focus - Champion

DIANA GANDEGA

"An athlete should be able to perform on the court and influence the world"

"We are more than athletes," Diana Gandega begins the interview, quoting LeBron James. An obvious reference for this basketball player, former international and Olympian with the Malian national team.

Today, she is the CEO of the Val-d'Oise departmental basketball committee. In 2009, the year the program was created, the athlete joined Peace and Sport's Champions for Peace Club.

"It happened naturally. I come from a family of six children where everything is done through sharing. I was already helping associations in France and Africa on an ad hoc basis with equipment donations."

For her, it is obvious that athletes should be involved in activities beyond sport, provided they have the capacity to do so.

"I think athletes should be able to perform on the field and influence the world in the best way they can. They will be listened to, they will be seen, and their words will have more impact."

This becomes clear to her whenever she arrives at sports facilities in remote areas and sees young women's eyes light up. She becomes a role model, an example, simply by being there, standing on the basketball court.



"Some top athletes focus solely on their sport, and you can't blame them for that. But those who have the ability to do more should go for it. Because we have that power in our hands."

"Peace and Sport was one of the first NGOs to recognize the value of athletes"

With the perspective that years of volunteering have given her, Diana can clearly see the progress made in athletes' engagement: more and more of them are getting involved.

"Peace and Sport was one of the first NGOs to focus on athletes and show the value we have."

For more than fifteen years, projects have been supported and developed around the world through the initiatives of several Champions for Peace. These programs provide not only visibility but also a structure for athletes' commitment. It goes beyond simply donating equipment.

Diana herself has also launched her own association. Together with her sister, she runs Dynastie Gandega in Mali. Their long-term goal is to support promising young women and encourage empowerment through sport.

"We are looking to engage top athletes more than before. And with social media, we also realize that people follow us for what we say - not only for our sporting results."

"We are driving forces for the society"

Peace and Sport's philosophy is also, and above all, about creating connections: between athletes, between disciplines, between countries and between different roles within the sporting world.

It creates spaces for exchange, which sometimes lead to lasting partnerships.

In 2024, Diana travelled to Burundi for the first time with Vénuste Niyongabo. Together, they organized the shipment of basketball equipment to Burundian clubs thanks to Diana's contacts in the Paris region. A bridge had been built.

"I enjoyed it so much that I went back the following year for the Friendship Games. In the future, we would like to make this partnership permanent so that the children receive equipment once a year."

And it is not only a matter for associations or NGOs. Top-level athletes and former athletes are an important part of society, and Diana is convinced of it.

The old model of the athlete who "only" wins medals should be left behind.

"It is important to understand that everything sport can bring to a person is transferable to everyday life. Don't put athletes in a box. We can bring so much more. We are driving forces in society because we go through ups and downs, battles and challenges. Once we enter the professional world, we can work miracles."



“Don't put athletes in a box.

We can bring so much more. We are driving forces in society because we go through ups and downs, battles and challenges. Once we enter the professional world, we can work miracles.

Monaco

E1 SERIES

Racing toward a sustainable future

Imagine a sport capable of bringing together Didier Drogba, Rafael Nadal, LeBron James, Tom Brady and, Sergio Pérez as well as Will Smith and Steve Aoki. The E1 Series has achieved just that.

Created in 2024 by Alejandro Agag — who was also behind Formula E — and Rodi Basso, this world championship for 100% electric racing boats is entering its third season with the clear ambition of establishing itself as a major event on the international sporting calendar.

But the E1 Series is not merely a showcase for celebrities. It positions itself as an accelerator of innovation and a full-scale laboratory for the ecological transition of the maritime sector. The arrival of new teams, including Team Monaco, confirms this momentum.

A New Stage for International Competition

Inspired by motor sports, the E1 Series organizes Grand Prix events in iconic cities such as Jeddah, Miami, Venice and Monaco.

Each stage takes place over two days in a knockout format, culminating in a final between the six best teams. The races are short and intense, lasting no more than fifteen minutes.

The championship is unique in that it is a team competition. It is not an individual driver who is crowned champion, but a team. Each team fields two drivers — one male and one female — who take turns piloting the same boat. This parity, enshrined in the rules, shapes the very identity of the competition.

All teams use the same model, the RaceBird, equipped with hydrofoils that allow the boat to rise above the water at high speed. The visual impression is striking, almost aerial.

The international personalities associated with the teams are not the drivers but the owners and ambassadors. Their role goes beyond simple media visibility. They help embed the discipline in a narrative of innovation and environmental responsibility.

An Environmental Commitment Under Scrutiny

The E1 Series has a clear objective: to contribute reducing emissions from competitive water sports. Like Formula E for cars, it aims to accelerate the adoption of electric technologies on the water and demonstrate that performance and clean propulsion are not incompatible.

Each stage is accompanied by local awareness initiatives and programs to promote coastal ecosystems, helping anchor the competition in a concrete environmental approach.

However, the challenge remains structural. A travelling championship involves international travel and complex logistics. The ecological credibility of the project will depend on its ability to control its overall footprint and maintain high environmental standards throughout its organization.

Maxime Nocher: Between the Monegasque Flag and a Commitment to Peace

For Maxime Nocher, founder of the team, driver for Team Monaco and Peace and Sport Champion for Peace, the commitment extends beyond the sporting dimension alone. Driving a boat under the Monegasque flag is not simply a matter of affiliation: it carries strong symbolic responsibility. Under the leadership of its sovereigns, the Principality has established itself as a committed actor in ocean preservation and environmental protection.

Flying its colours in a championship based on electric innovation gives each start a special significance.

The Team Monaco boat also bears the Peace and Sport logo, a visible reminder of the link between performance and responsibility.

For Maxime Nocher, this convergence is no coincidence. His title of Champion for Peace is based on the conviction that sport can serve as a vehicle for positive engagement.

By combining high-level competition, technological innovation and an environmental message, the E1 Series offers a platform consistent with this vision.

"Representing Monaco in a forward-looking championship while wearing the colours of Peace and Sport gives extra meaning to each race. It's not just about going fast. It's about demonstrating that sport can embody a collective demand for responsibility and ambition."

Monaco, a Showcase for a Shared Ambition

The Monaco stage occupies a unique place in the E1 Series calendar. It crystallizes the convergence between technological innovation, environmental commitment and sports diplomacy. More than just a Grand Prix, it embodies an open-air demonstration of a territory's ability to combine performance, responsibility and international influence.

Team Monaco's commitment is part of a long-standing tradition. The Principality has made ocean conservation and environmental transition a key focus of its international action. Hosting an electric competition on the water, along its coastline, is a sporting expression of this political orientation.

Among the committed owners is Didier Drogba, Vice-President of Peace and Sport and the only African team owner in the championship. For him, the E1 Series goes beyond the strict framework of competition:

"Sport can be a catalyst for change. The E1 Series demonstrates that sporting excellence and technological innovation can serve a broader cause. As an African, I want to show that our continent has a rightful place in clean technologies and the industries of the future."

In Monaco, the E1 Series has found a platform consistent with its founding ambition. The discipline is gaining visibility, but its credibility will depend on its ability to sustainably anchor its model in measurable impact.

If this balance between spectacle, innovation and responsibility is maintained, the E1 Series could establish itself as one of the markers of a sport that fully embraces its role in addressing contemporary challenges.

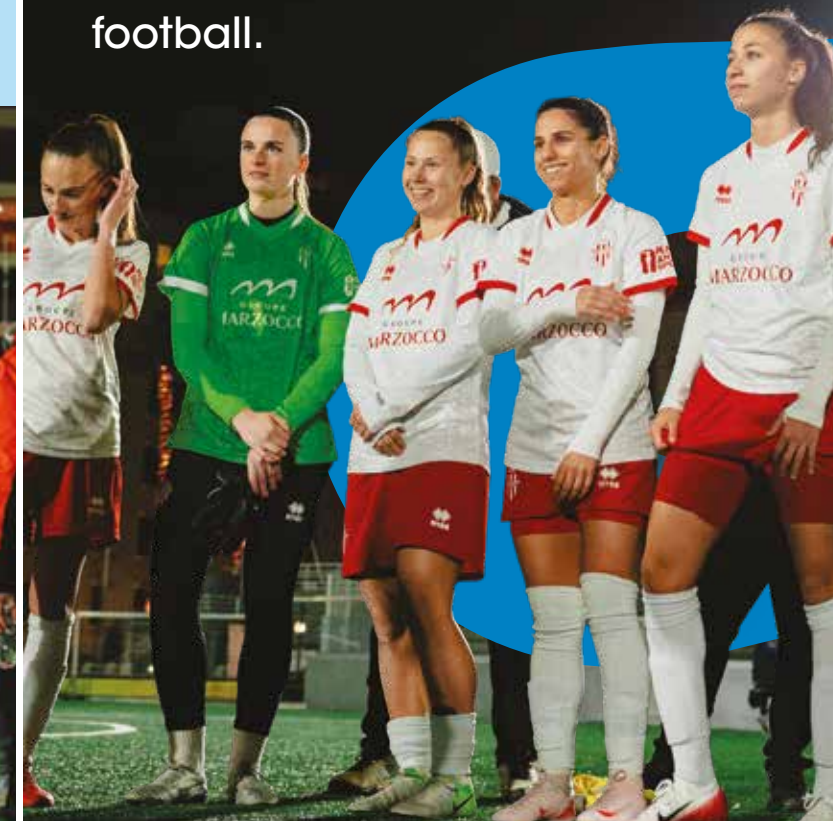


E1 driver Maxime Nocher (in white) with H.S.H the Prince Albert II and the President and Founder of Peace and Sport Joël Bouzou
@palaisprincipier

Monaco

MONACO UNITED FC

Monaco sets its sights on women's football



It was a series of coincidences that led Marco Simone to women's football.

"I was approached to coach PSG Women, so I started following the French league, especially the clubs playing in the Women's Champions League."

He put aside any preconceptions he might have had as a former Italian international. "

In the past, I wrongly looked down on women who played football..."

It quickly became obvious to him. There is potential, determination, desire and, above all, freshness among female footballers: a freshness that reminds him of the very essence of football. A desire to play as on the first day, with passion, solidarity and team spirit. The deal with PSG eventually fell through, but another adventure was already taking shape: the creation of a women's team in Monaco.

"I thought to myself: there are all the big teams in women's football. Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Nantes, but not Monaco. So, I wanted to create a project to represent the Principality of Monaco in the top-tier championships."

To carry out such a project, several elements must fall into place: financial investment, visibility and commitment — anima e corpo, body and soul. **"I realize that thanks to my name and the visibility I have in football, it helps raise awareness about**

the project. But what I give, the players give back to me a hundredfold."

Monaco United FC is enjoying a series of positive results and aims to reach the "Première Ligue" within four years. There is no room for wishful thinking, only hard work. Marco Simone, both president and coach of the team, is also perceptive in his criticism of political rhetoric: **"Politicians and institutions talk about women's football, but they only implement 10% of what they say. If everything that has been promised for women's football were actually achieved, the level today would not be far from that of men's football."**

As in any field, action must follow words.

For now, more than a team, a family

After a period of reflection, Marco Simone decided to take action with a long-term vision: first, to build a competitive team capable of climbing the divisions of the French Women's Football Championship year after year. The next step would be to establish an academy to train coaches and young girls. The aim is to launch a long-term commitment and encourage the empowerment of young girls through sport.

A new club inevitably starts at the bottom of the ladder, in the district league. This meant convincing several players to join the project even if it meant dropping down a division. Recruitment was also carried out almost entirely through video analysis.

Joining Monaco United Women's FC in its early days was therefore quite a gamble. But on the pitch, at every training session, the players' commitment knows no bounds. Behind these players, however, are ordinary life stories. Some are single mothers, others work as cashiers, employees or students. They are everyday women, far removed from the luxury and glamour sometimes associated with the Principality of Monaco.

Yet, every week they put on their jerseys with the same pride and determination. Their commitment reminds us that football is fueled first and foremost by passion, sacrifice and solidarity, long before it becomes a matter of prestige. It was up to Marco Simone to build the team and establish a clear game plan. Committed to their captain, Houleye Deme, the players interact with their coach daily. This is a team that values understanding the strategies it commits to. It just goes to show that female athletes rise to the occasion when given an ambitious opportunity.

"Solidarity among the girls is much stronger than among the boys: it can even be dangerous for the coach."

Laughing, Marco Simone considers himself warned.

The road ahead is long and full of challenges. But with the support of the striker who won the 1995 Champions League with AC Milan, there is little doubt that Monaco United FC is on the right track.

"If everything that has been promised for women's football were actually achieved, the level today would not be far from that of men's football."



Culture

BELIEVE IN YOUR DREAMS

Grace Geyoro's message to the next generation

In collaboration with Chloé Céliérien, French international midfielder Grace Geyoro recounts her journey from a young girl to a professional footballer. A comic book full of twists and turns, illustrated by Blachette.

"Girls don't play football" is a phrase that young Grace Geyoro heard a thousand times, sometimes from the children in her neighbourhood, sometimes from her own mother...

This comic book, just over 90 pages long, takes us alongside young Grace to the suburb of Les Aubrais in Orléans. The artwork is beautiful, with colourful and detailed pages. The aesthetic makes it easy to follow a journey fraught with obstacles and to better understand the character of the Franco-Congolese champion.

"No matter where you come from, no matter what you do today, it won't determine who you will be tomorrow." This is the message she wanted to convey in this book. Accompanied by the Marabulles publishing house, the football star looks back on her birth in a Democratic Republic of Congo ravaged by war, recalls her almost innate talent for football, developed alongside her older brother, and recounts the difficulties she encountered in joining a club that was then mainly made up of boys. Page after page, the story unfolds with lightness and emotion, recounting the 28 years of her life.

How does one become a PSG player? Through self-sacrifice and early mornings at 5 a.m. The next generation has been warned. When asked about this project, Grace told Peace and Sport-The Magazine: "It's really a summary of my journey. The aim is to share my life story and career and to encourage young girls who may be facing the same difficulties. To encourage, to pass on knowledge, to advise, to be a bit like a big sister. Because, like many players today, I didn't have the chance to receive this kind of advice."

The comic book is primarily aimed at children, with its accessible reading style and deliberately universal message: "If you want to, you can dream big and achieve it." But it is no less interesting for adults. Discovering Grace's journey also means learning more about an important chapter in the history of women's football. It is high time we got to know our champions better.



Culture

HIGHLIGHTS

Surya Bonaly, *Fire on Ice*

This comic book recounts the extraordinary career of the French figure skater, a symbol of audacity and independence in a highly codified world. From her early beginnings to her now-iconic technical feats, the book highlights the determination of an athlete who refused to conform. An inspiring story about perseverance, identity and freedom of expression in sport.

Khalida Popal, *My Beautiful Sisters*

In this autobiographical account, Khalida Popal recounts the birth of the Afghan women's national football team and the fight for women's right to play, exist and assert themselves. Balancing individual courage and collective mobilization, the book sheds light on the political significance of sport. Malala Yousafzai, Peace Nobel Prize, praises the work as "captivating, moving and incredibly important... essential reading for everyone," highlighting its universal power.

Exhibition - *The Flame Will Never Be Extinguished*, Musée National du Sport

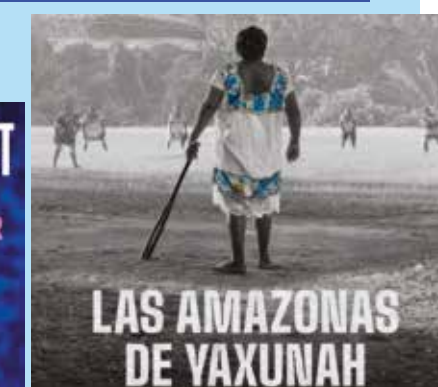
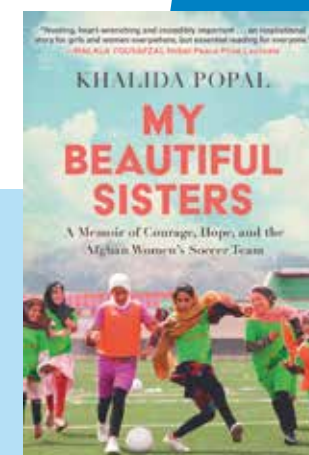
Presented at the National Sports Museum in Nice, at the heart of the Allianz Riviera Stadium, the exhibition opened on February 11, 2026. Through more than 500 objects, archives and immersive narratives, it extends the momentum of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games and explores their lasting legacy. A sensitive and well-documented journey that reminds us that the Olympic flame transcends the event itself, inscribing sport in our collective memory and carrying it forward toward the 2030 Winter Games.

Documentary - *Las Amazonas de Yaxunah*

Winner of the Peace and Sport Documentary Prize at the 2025 SPORTEl Awards, this documentary traces the journey of a softball team made up of Mayan women from Yucatán, Mexico. Playing barefoot in their traditional *huipiles*, they challenge gender norms and transform sport into a symbol of identity, resilience and emancipation. A powerful documentary that authentically illustrates sport's ability to change mindsets and strengthen communities.

Tony Estanguet, *For the Love of Sport*

In this personal account, Champion for Peace Tony Estanguet reveals the behind-the-scenes story of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Between political, logistical and human challenges, he shares the stakes of an extraordinary project and the collective determination required to transform a dream into a lasting legacy for sport.



History

ANDRÉS ESCOBAR

The tragedy behind a World Cup

It was on a warm summer Friday that Andrés Escobar Saldarriaga, a Colombian footballer, lost his life.

On June 17, 1994, the FIFA World Cup opened in the United States. It was the first time the North American country had hosted the competition. The mood was festive. Supporters flocked to stadiums in Dallas, Chicago, Washington and Orlando. It was a picture-perfect scene.

Given their recent performances on the international stage, Colombia were among the favorites. Four years earlier, at the 1990 World Cup in Italy, the Cafeteros had raised the hopes of an entire nation by securing a 1-1 draw against Germany, the future world champions, in the group stage. Since then, the team had also made a lasting impression with a 3-0 victory over Argentina, the reigning World Cup runners-up. Many in Colombia had begun to dream of seeing their team lift the World Cup trophy.

In a country ravaged by cocaine trafficking, football had become a rare breath of fresh air for a population faced with daily violence. Corruption, assassinations, settling of scores: the Colombian state at the time was often described by experts as a "narco-state".

Football itself did not escape the influence of the cartels. At various levels, criminal organizations infiltrated the sport, which had become a showcase of power for the Cali and Medellín cartels.

Andrés Escobar and his teammates arrived in the United States carrying the hopes of an entire nation, but also under the close scrutiny of drug traffickers and the international media.

Sporting Disappointment Followed by Human Tragedy

The group stage began. On June 18, 1994, Colombia lost to Romania (3-1). On June 22, they faced the United States in front of 93,689 spectators at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena.

In the 34th minute, the host nation opened the score. From a cross from the left, central defender Andrés Escobar attempted to clear the ball but deflected it into his own net. The match ended in a 2-1 victory for the United States.

Many believed that the outcome of the match might have been different without this unfortunate mistake. Colombia's hopes were dashed: elimination was already looming.



The team ended their tournament on June 26 with a 2-0 victory over Switzerland. Upon their return home, the players who had left as heroes were met with a much more hostile atmosphere. Death threats circulated. Andrés Escobar, however, did not seem concerned. He calmly said: ***"In football, unlike in fights between wild animals, death does not exist. No one dies, no one gets killed. There is only pleasure."***

On the night of July 2, 1994, the news broke: Andrés Escobar had been shot dead in the parking lot of a nightclub on the outskirts of Medellín.

Sports Betting or Tragic accident?

On the evening of Friday, July 1, Andrés went out with his best friend John Jairo. They moved from bar to bar before ending the night dancing in a nightclub. The atmosphere was festive, simply because they were 27 years old and the warmth of the night enveloped Medellín.

Around three o'clock in the morning, an altercation broke out between the player and a group of men. Two brothers, Juan Santiago and Pedro David Gallón, were responsible for the



provocation. Officially merchants, they were suspected at the time of being linked to illegal betting networks.

In the parking lot, their driver and bodyguard, Humberto Muñoz Castro, pulled out a gun and fired six shots. Andrés Escobar died shortly afterwards in hospital. Convicted of murder, Muñoz Castro was sentenced to 43 years in prison.

The shockwave was immense. For the first time, a national sporting idol had been murdered. In a country accustomed to the violence of the 1980s and 1990s, the shock was profound. The funeral of Andrés, nicknamed "El Caballero de la Cancha" ("the Gentleman of the Pitch") for his elegance and fair play, brought together nearly 120,000 people in a stadium in Medellín, in the presence of Colombian President César Gaviria. His teammates carried the coffin.

Andrés Escobar's father would never watch another football match again.

On July 17, 1994, Brazil won the World Cup. It was a tournament forever marked by tragedy.

From 1994 to 2026: Have we really learned anything?

Thirty-two years after the murder of Andrés Escobar, the 2026 World Cup will bring world football back to the United States. Today's Colombia is no longer the Colombia of the 1990s, and the context has significantly evolved.

Yet, the memory of 1994 extends far beyond its national borders. It raises questions about our collective ability to keep sport within the bounds of the game at a time when the world is once again experiencing a period of tension, marked in many places by persistent armed conflict, deep social divisions, identity tensions and increasing polarization of public debate. In such unstable contexts, major international competitions can become spaces for intense emotional expression.

In 1994, a sporting error was caught up in a climate already marked by violence. In 2026, the forms of brutality are no longer comparable, but the pressure surrounding athletes remains immense: media pressure, economic pressure and now digital pressure.

The expectations placed on them sometimes remain disproportionate, as if sporting victory could compensate for the fragilities of an era.

The Escobar tragedy reminds us of a simple truth: sport always reflects the state of the society around it.

More than thirty years later, the question remains open: have we learned to contain our excesses, or do we continue to burden the playing field with a weight it cannot bear?

Call for Action

SOCIAL DIVISIONS AND GROWING TENSIONS

"Peace through sport requires method"

It was his personal history that led Jean-Jérôme Perrin-Mortier to become involved with Peace and Sport. Now Chief Executive Officer, he constantly asks his teams a crucial question: "Why are you implementing this?" Because, in his view, "it is impossible to carry out social projects without a clear vision."



"We must adopt an approach based on understanding contexts, particularly for field programs. We must refer to what is happening at the grassroots level, as close as possible to the people. Understanding the issues at stake is essential to avoid an empirical approach."

Sport cannot be a magical or automatic tool for peace. It must be designed, supported and structured in close collaboration with local communities. **"We have a balanced relationship where each party benefits from the other's expertise."**

During his previous experiences as an Olympic coach, Jean-Jérôme discovered several continents: Latin America, Africa and Asia. That is where his conviction was born: after high-level sport comes social engagement.

Building Together and Acting Together

He often thinks back to a situation that reminds him of the importance of knowing the field in order to propose appropriate solutions. While coaching the South African kayaking team in preparation for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, Jean-Jérôme noticed that each time one of his athletes returned to his home region, he came back four to five kilos heavier. During a trip to the township, he heard young people mocking him, saying that he had HIV/AIDS.

"I understood. When he returned to his township, he couldn't be too fit, because being thin meant having AIDS. The social pressure was too strong."

This episode illustrates the invisible mechanisms that society can produce. Jean-Jérôme would never have been able

to understand this without going into the community and questioning realities that cannot be discovered from behind a desk.

Legitimizing and Promoting the Best Initiatives

Before becoming CEO of Peace and Sport, Jean-Jérôme Perrin-Mortier was Director of Sports and Programs, responsible for organizing and coordinating field projects.

Over the years, the methodology developed by Peace and Sport has yielded its first concrete results in communities.

"We often find that there are local actors doing remarkable work. But they face a lack of recognition that does not always allow them to demonstrate that their actions serve the public interest."

To address this, the organization is now preparing a new phase: the creation of a certification system designed to support and reinforce the legitimacy of the best initiatives.

"This will not be a simple logo for communication purposes or a way of handing out good marks," insists Jean-Jérôme. "We want to promote these Peacemakers to decision-makers. We want to introduce them to the organizations we have

encountered and which, each in their own way, deserve our support."

#WhiteCard: An Awareness Campaign

In a particularly tense geopolitical context, Peace and Sport also wishes to raise public awareness of the plight of children living in conflict zones or deprived of the right to go to school through its #WhiteCard campaign.

Since 2014, the #WhiteCard has been raised every year on April 6, the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, as a symbol of peace.

"With the sporting reference to red and yellow cards, this white card symbolizes the neutrality of sport."

The #WhiteCard campaign is also an opportunity for everyone to share their story with sport: an anecdote, a memorable moment or an experience where sport opened the door to something greater.

See you next April!

"We must adopt an approach based on understanding contexts, particularly for field programs. We must refer to what is happening at the grassroots level, as close as possible to the people. Understanding the issues at stake is essential to avoid an empirical approach."

Jean-Jérôme Perrin-Mortier
CEO Peace and Sport





Based on an original idea by Joël Bouzou
 Peace and Sport - The magazine offered by Peace and Sport
 Publishing Directors: Jean-Jérôme Perrin-Mortier and Ludovic Dau
 Editorial Manager: Robin Béchade
 Editorial Team: Alice Dubernet, Amaury Lhermitte, Cyril Dautre,
 Antoine Boulo and the Peace and Sport teams
 Design and Creative Direction: La Tête & Les Jambes
 Press Contact: cb@peace-sport.org
 Photo Credits: Peace and Sport, Jean-Charles Vinaj, Palais Princier,
 Amaury Lhermitte, Alice Dubernet, Andrés Alvarado,
 Fondation Vénuste Niyongabo, JJPC - Je Joue pour le Congo,
 Kick-Off Production, UCI, Monaco United, Editions Marabout, John Murray
 Publishers Ltd, Musée National du Sport, Editions Calmann Levy, SportBible



FOR THEM, A SIMPLE GESTURE, RAISE YOUR **#WHITECARD**

Today, 251 million children
are out of school.*

Learning, playing, growing up in peace:
their right.

* UNICEF



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PEACE AND SPORT THE MAGAZINE

JANUARY - JUNE 2026 | ISSUE #1



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