

Border Village League



By Gary K. Sutton



t

he Border Village League (BVL) was established in 2013 by Mr. Abdulla Yacoub, a Palestinian businessman who lives in the diaspora in Dubai. BVL has given many Palestinian young people who love to play soccer the opportunity to pursue the sport. It has also removed several obstacles that border communities face: a lack of opportunity to interact with others on a social or sporting level, and the opportunity to play football on a full-sized, fully equipped football pitch.

Abdulla notes, “It was my love of football that motivated me to establish the Border Village League. I wanted to encourage youth to play football and give them the opportunity to compete. My love of football began when I was at school and a member of my school’s first team for three years running.”

After Abdulla discovered how negatively seam line villages have been impacted by the proximity of the separation wall, he felt compelled to do something about it, especially in his home village of Budrus and its surrounding communities. So Abdulla helped organize the BVL to provide a sports-focused, community-building competition for eight West Ramallah seam line communities.

“I have provided all the players and coaches with all they need to play football; football boots, uniforms for each player, shin pads, nets, footballs, etc. and arranged for official Palestinian Football Association referees and full-sized well-equipped pitches for them to play on.”

There have been challenges, including a lack of communication between villages and difficulty in bringing them together. But each year the competition has increasing community support, and now many families attend the games to cheer their teams on. The local boys follow the competition closely, dreaming of the day they can represent their community and win the coveted BVL trophy or the individual performance, top player, and goalkeeper cups. Seam line communities that have not interacted much with



Abdulla Yacoub, the Palestinian businessman who started and supported the Border Village League.

neighboring towns and villages are now developing closer relationships.

“I am very happy to see the results of our simple initiative in setting up the BVL, and it is my wish to see the competition expand to new communities, bringing greater unity and cooperation and providing healthy, safe activities for village youth and, in the long term, greater awareness of the plight of these marginalized Palestinian communities.”

Equal Opportunity Community Initiative – Ramallah has partnered with Abdulla since the BVL’s inception and has managed the competition for him. As country director, I met with former FIFA head, Mr. Sepp Blatter, during his visit to Palestine shortly

BVL finalists Rantis and Shibteen.

before the 2014 Football World Cup. Mr. Blatter was so impressed with the BVL that he presented me with a banner of recognition from FIFA for BVL’s role in supporting football in Palestine.

Equal Opportunity Community Initiative – Ramallah has also had the support of several local NGOs and businesses, the Palestine Football Association and the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Its goal is to further expand the competition into more areas and establish youth and women’s competitions.

Abdulla encourages everyone who has the ability to promote sports activities in Palestine, and he highlights that Palestinians not only need material support but also moral support in order that competitions such as the BVL meet with success.

Gary K. Sutton is country director for Equal Opportunity Community Initiative.



دوري قرى الجدار
BORDER VILLAGE
LEAGUE