

Monday, March 27th, 2023

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PLAYTIME Namibia - Steven Damaseb

Peter: First of all, we want to start by getting your consent. As Justine explained we are here from the University in Massachusetts (WPI), working with the Namibian National Olympic Committee to conduct research and seek to roll out these curriculums at the school locations but first of all, we would like to have your consent to record you for video and audio and to use your words. Not your name specifically, but your words to help direct that?

Steven: Yes

Peter: So can you begin by telling us a little bit about yourself, and your role at Playtime Namibia?

Steven: Yes, My name is Steven Damaseb. I was born in ____ I am 58 years old. And I played football in my younger days, I also represented my country Namibia in field games. I joined Playtime in 2014 and I enjoy working with the youth to help the youth and teach them whatever they need to be taught. As a youth, it's a long way they are going so parents must stand in, and our elders must stand in to teach them and guide them. Like me, I am a role model for them here in Walvis Bay for maybe 200 plus kids every day here at playtime of all different age groups. We start with under nine all the way up to under 17s.

As I've mentioned earlier, I was a soccer player, and that inspired me to give back what I have learned from the people who have taught me and who respect the small ones and also the ones who are in need, that's what I stand for.

Peter: So, you know, Justin was telling us that you are a legend in your community here. And what's important in having this legacy is the background that sort of drove you to the place you are today. Can you talk about sort of your childhood and what got you involved in sports and led you to the position you are in today and how sports are a big aspect of that

Steven: In my younger days, why I started with football, the person that inspired me to start in football was my uncle. He was the one who inspired me when he would go to training with me. And I was carrying his soccer boots, then I started to get interested in football. When I started I started with Chelsea _____. I started playing in 1981 and I started playing in the Big Cup, the main state cup. We lost in the final against black Africa. The second year in 82 we qualified for the same cup and we lost to the same team. From there on, soccer was something good for me. I

felt so comfortable. I was the striker and when I gave the ball to someone it was so rewarding for me, that's why I became a footballer.

Peter: Did you think you would ever become a footballer? Did you think you had the opportunities open and available to you? What circumstances could have potentially stopped you from being a footballer?

Steven: yeah, when I started playing football, I never thought I could play somewhere at a high level that was not in my plans. But judging by my style of playing, people judged me and said "You know, this guy is a good guy, one day you will play there"

_____ (roofundane) is about 500 km to the north so now it's a small town compared to the city here, so later on I left the smaller town and moved to play in the city and they saw the potential I had and they chose me to play for the national team. Being on the national team was unexpected but I am representing 1.5 million Namibians, it was really something else for me.

Peter: Coach Steven, as you can imagine there are probably lots of kids like you with the potential you had but it is just the resources and role models that they lack to get to the stage that you were able to get to. But before we dive into that, how important do you believe sports development is for the children in Namibia especially in rural communities, such as developing themselves holistically and maintaining healthy lifestyles, how important do you think that is?

Steven: You know I think sports for the children are very important even for the elders, sports, you have to train, and to train is to stay healthy. For the kids, developing them in this way is very important. In the past, we did not have this opportunity to teach the kids these skills. His muscles grow and develop focusing on getting stronger. Work, stand up, and start running. But do some stretches before. They must be trained and through training, they develop, and through developing they gain the goal that they are aiming for. It is very important to develop the small ones.

Peter: So these children are to some extent fortunate to have the opportunity here at Playtime Namibia and children in Katutura region have organizations such as physically active youth and Basketball Artists school and they are fortunate enough to become involved with those organizations and develop themselves in those ways. But here specifically at playtime in Namibia, what are some challenges that the students experience, the circumstances that they experience, which could affect their potential to become great in sports or potentially to achieve what they're looking for in the future?

Steven: Here at playtime, what we are busy with is football. But with the little ones we are busy with sports development, and multi-sports. For the big one's football. And the challenge here is I don't want to mention politics but people are selfish. They don't want to give people the chance

to prove themselves. But here at playtime, is there to facilitate them with the development of the complex they have, playtime is here to help and teach them. Sometimes we have different programs to teach them about the different dangers in the Community. Sexual abuse, and something other different, that's what playtime is there for.

I think also we are planning to have a school program here at playtime, bring them in, teach them about their education, teach them about careers, and what he or she wants to become.

Peter: What do you say the children struggle with most? Is there a common struggle that they experience or just their individual struggles and has been something top of mind that they struggle with most that you and Playtime are trying to solve and help them through?

Steven: individual struggle, in the community they are struggling with that and it's very difficult. Some of them didn't get food for one or two whole days, and you know if we can go into the neighborhood and we can see what the struggle they are facing. But they come here and say "Ah coach I didn't eat for so many days" and you can not train someone who didn't eat for so many days, rather you let them sit and watch or you let them go home and rest. That's one huge challenge we have. But we keep on we keep striving to put them in places they want to be.

Peter: give them hope to some extent?

Steven: Not to some extent, give them hope! All of them are dreaming of being one day, you know be. They are watching TV nowadays and they saw the performance of Mboma. Mbomba is one of the outstanding Namibian athletes, you hear them say, "I wanna be like Mboma". She is a role model for them. They want to be like her. If we do running here, they want to run like Mboma, win like Mboma.

so that's something that's good for them. To point to someone what he must be. That's something good.

Peter: The issue with sometimes the food, does playtime have the resources and the funding necessary to maybe supplement the nutrition if they're lacking it back at home?

Steven: yah yah good question, playtime always, they are supporting the kids, and in the corona time, in the first year it was chaos and that made everything difficult. People were so hungry. But here at playtime, we gave people parasols for the Community to help them, I think it was 250 people that got parasols and it was for the children. Every kid that comes here got a parcel. On behalf of their small ones. Playtime is always looking out for the youth and also are planning to do the same thing we did during Corona time, the food parcels.

Peter: What about access to Playtime? How long do they have to walk to get here? How do they get here? Are they from the local region so it's a very short walk? Do they come from the area surrounding the township?

Steven: Basically now, it's local. For the small ones in the pre-primary, every day we go pick them up on the bus, we bring them here and play with them and then after, we bring them back to their selective schools. For the others, the under 9s under 11s, under 13s, under 15s, and under 17s, they come on their own, because it's neighboring areas so they walk down to playtime. We have fun together and after that, they walk back.

Pete: What does the schedule look like? Is it the whole day that playtime runs?

Steven: ya whole day. For now, we start at 9 am with the small ones and end at 11:30 and the others are at 2-6 pm (different age groups come in on the hour).

Peter: So these small ones are not in school? Is that why they can come in the morning?

Steven no, no they are in school. We pick them up from the schools.

Peter And all the other ones. They come in the afternoon and evenings because they have school time all day?

Steven: Correct, yeah it is our sports program we are giving them.

Peter: So Steven, what we are trying to do in our project is we're trying to bring these sports developments to local communities and schools all across Namibia in Walvis Bay, Swakopmund Kentmanstooop, Omaruru, and Luderitz down south. We would like to learn from you. What are some ways that we can, and What are some insights you potentially have that we can use to roll out these programs of sports development and elevate youths' lives? What are some things that you have learned during your time here at Playtime that are important for us to keep in mind when we seek to roll out these programs?

Steven: What I think the important thing is to bring in Is as you came now. Do you understand? We need people to come together and advise us on what to do with the kids and how we can help them develop.

Sometimes we don't know the basics or what we can or how we can help the kids in terms of development.

Most of us are not well "taught". We did not go we did not attend those courses to guide the kids on the right way

For me, it's better to have more of you here. To teach us how to do and what to and we forward that in what we do

With the children. I think that will be very important. Yeah.

Peter: How much do you think the kid's value sort of emotional welfare, mental, physical welfare, especially the older ones as they go through school, and they are involved in playtime, do you see them increasingly starting to value those things more in order to elevate their life?

Steven: Yeah, you know just to go back a year, when we started, when we started, most of our guys were never taught how to pass and control the ball. They were never taught how to set the ball, get ready and run. So we had a tournament here at these fields And our teams, we started with under 13 15s, we lost 8-0 we only get high scores against us. But today! Comparing that time to today teams are talking about playtime and respect playtime and all wanted to join playtime and the potential they get from the training here At playtime, for me, it is a big thing. Nowadays for them to show them what they did in the past. For them now, they value themselves

Peter: And how much do you value working with these children?

Steven: Hey hey, you know, I can say that. The work we put in here is a source of pride for us and what we did. I can not count one by one but sometimes I feel so emotional, it is tough. To work with them, to bring them in like this. From zero points to like ten points, it is a big thing.

Peter: Steven, do you have any comments or questions for us? During our time here? Do you have any additional insight you'd like to provide that we maybe didn't touch upon, if not no problem, we want to just give you the opportunity to provide any additional insight.

Steven: First off I want to say I am thankful to meet you guys. They say the world is small and it really is small, I never expected to meet you guys from that far away for you to come to Namibia and have an interview and a nice talk. All these things. It's a learning curve for me. I am learning from you guys. It doesn't matter the face, but the content teaches me a lot and it means a lot to me. I can teach others in a positive way, it is one day where you are coming from. We all one day want to be where we want to be, do you understand? And some don't want to end up in Namibia. We want to go abroad to be seen. And many others as well. What you bring for me here is big for me and I really appreciate when this happens for the kids as well so they can get the good teachings that you give them.

Peter: If we can teach the students to be lifelong learners like you, we will have succeeded in what we're trying to do.

Steven: Thank you so much we appreciate it.