

At the Eleventh Hour

—saving the soul of the people's game

JOSHUA SURTEES

In 2011, John Terry was suspended as captain of the England football team pending an investigation into allegations he had racially abused a black footballer, Anton Ferdinand. In a Premiership match between Chelsea and QPR he allegedly called his opponent a "f---ing black c--t."

In 2012 the FA handed out a six-game ban to Uruguayan international Luis Suarez for repeatedly calling Manchester United's French fullback Patrice Evra "negrito."

Mario Balotelli, now playing for AC Milan, is frequently subjected to monkey chants by racist fans. At one stage while an Inter player, Juventus fans loudly informed him, "There are no black Italians."

In Russia, meanwhile, fans of Zenit St Petersburg last year wrote their own club manifesto ordering the club's owners not to buy any black or gay players.

This depressing element of the modern game could be eradicated overnight if Sepp Blatter's FIFA organisation wanted to rid the game of it. But instead of immediately banning or suspending clubs and countries whose fans chant racist abuse, they hand out paltry fines instead. This makes no impact and solves nothing. It's almost a tacit acceptance of the racism that still exists.

That a game of such global standing, such social power, a game with the ability to illuminate lives, bring pleasure to millions, generate billions in money and create superstars—virtual ambassadors—like Pele, David Beckham and Zinedine Zidane, should still be blighted by prejudice in 2013 is shocking.

Mihalis Monemvasiotis, a passionate Greek football supporter based in London, has created a project that might do more to kick racism out of football than anything the football associations have ever done.

The project, called Eleven, is simple on paper but will take a huge international effort to achieve.

A documentary film about 11 children aged 11 years old from 11 countries coming together to form one football team to play a game in London against 11 Premiership footballers (from the same 11 countries as the children) in June next year, as a prelude to the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. That's the objective, and all those involved have just over six months to complete the ambitious task.

T&T is one of the countries Monemvasiotis selected to take part. (The others are Australia, Brazil, Denmark, Egypt, Greece, Japan, South Africa, Spain, UK and USA.)

The hope is that a campaign like this will resonate with supporters who are tired of mindless idiots and bigotry and want a return to the pure joy of the game that children feel, that everybody who has ever fallen in love with football felt as a child.

The film will also have an ethnographic and educational element. Each child will be filmed during a typical day, so that the audience will get to see where the child is from, his or her family, friends, schoolteachers. Amongst all this we will see where the child plays football and what role it plays in his life.

■ Continues on Page A34



Eleven boots to fill

■ Continued from Page A33

As the blurb describes, "From the cosmopolitan streets of Copenhagen to the favelas of Rio, to the scorching sun of Johannesburg, we will follow these children for one day, exploring the parts their environment and family structure have played in shaping their character."

In each of the countries, Monemvasiotis has picked a film director whose job is to shortlist, interview and pick the child.

Juliette McCawley, a Trinidadian actor-turned-filmmaker trained by a director in London, has been selected to direct the T&T leg of the adventure.

McCawley joined a film consortium ten years ago in the States whilst acting in stage and b-movie productions. Having just moved back to T&T from England, she won the award for best short film at the T&T

Film Festival in September for her seven-minute film *Drink*, about the perils of being a recently arrived illegal immigrant in London.

This project will present a completely different kind of challenge in terms of the filming, editing and production of the film. She has a budget and timeframes and she has selected the charity she wants to promote (each of the 11 directors must pick a charity to support, the profits from the film will go towards.)

Her charity is the Just Because Foundation, which helps provide support for families who have children undergoing cancer treatment.

But the first and most important task is the difficult process of selecting a child from the many football-obsessed 11-year-olds in T&T.

She's asking children, parents and teachers who know suitable candidates to contact her and attend interviews starting this week.

MORE INFO:

Do you know a child who could fill these boots?

Criteria for applying for an interview:

Parents, guardians or teachers should e-mail trinidad@elevencampaign.org describing the child and why he or she would be a good candidate for the film.

The child needs to be outgoing, confident, friendly and most importantly passionate about football (playing and watching.)

Must be 11 years old for the next eight months.

Deadline for interview applications is **November 28**.

More information can be found at elevencampaign.org

METRO

NOW IN YOUR FRIDAY GUAR

Get more,
do more, enjoy
more this Christmas
with RBC.

©/™ Trademark(s) of Royal Bank of Canada. Used under licence.



LE

Transiti
to stay
and no
protecti
light and

\$
PRE