

Reading C

Ashok Rathod's Football OSCAR

It's early morning on a Sunday and an excited group of boys play football in the Back Garden, a large ground in Colaba, South Mumbai. Both teams are wearing colourful jerseys printed with logos that say: OSCAR-Education With a Kick.

At 23, Ashok Rathod, short and curly haired, is the oldest of the players. Unlike the others he's also yelling instructions on how to kick or pass and egging the others on- Ashok isn't just playing for his team, nor is he the fastest or the most skilful footballer here, yet the boys in both teams follow his lead and take directions from him.

Today's first goal-scorer is Anil Chauhan. Tall and well built, he's from nearby Ambedkar Nagar, a sprawling slum colony of about 12,000 people. Anil had, like many poor urban kids, dropped out after a few years of primary schooling. Years later, when he started working as a housekeeper in a bank, he realized his mistake.

"I didn't know how to read or write and couldn't even sign my name," says Anil, who enrolled at a night school last year because of Ashok Rathod, his neighbour, who plays football with him thrice a week. "It doesn't matter that I'm only in class five and 22 years old," says Anil.

Many of the other players too, went back to school because of Ashok, who started these football sessions five years ago.

When Ashok was a child, his father Shankar Rathod, a fisherman, regretted that his daughter and older son had dropped out of school. At one point Ashok too wanted to quit, but his father insisted that he continued, much against the neighbourhood norm. Ashok talks of how little value his peers and many of their parents placed on education.

"I saw boys regularly drop out of our municipal school," recalls Ashok. "Some left during a morning interval and never returned. As for the girls, a good many don't attend school anyway." The dropped-out boys used to hang out at the nearby Sassoon Docks, Mumbai's biggest fish market. They'd steal or pick up fish that had fallen from baskets, to sell and make easy money.

"And whenever or however they brought in some cash," Ashok explains, "the parents considered it clever." Worse, Ashok watched many of those boys squander these ill-gotten profits on drink, cigarettes and gambling. In 2006, after finishing high school, Ashok got a job with Magic Bus, a Mumbai NGO, which sent him to the city's poorer

areas to mentor children. That's how he realized that team-sports, particularly football, forged friendships, and called for discipline. It also had, overall, a positive effect in the children's lives. Why not do the same for the boys in my neighbourhood? Ashok thought.

He offered to teach football to a few boys he knew. In exchange, he told them to promise not to miss classes. On a Sunday in October 2006, he got a ball and invited the kids to play. Eighteen boys turned up. Ashok called his group OSCAR or the Organization for Social Change, Awareness and Responsibility.

Ashok, who learnt about football at Magic Bus, began teaching them the intricacies of the game. In between, he'd also slip in stories about his childhood friends who'd dropped out of school. "If you want a future, you've got to study," he urged over and over again, when they met to play on weekends. "Stay in school. I don't want you to end up like them!"



Meanwhile, Ashok was nervous about telling his family about OSCAR and his football sessions. What if his father objected? Since he was doing his Higher Secondary and working as well, Shankar Rathod would expect his son to spend his weekends catching up on school work; ironically, on the same days when Ashok was telling younger boys to study.

There were other problems as well. "Even if a boy wanted to return to school, it was often difficult convincing parents," he says. "In many cases, I had to go over and persuade them, often taking others with me." But once, after a few football players failed their final exams, their parents blamed Ashok. Football had become a distraction, they complained, as if nobody in their slum had failed before. "Some of the parents gathered outside my home, and shouted abuse," he says. "It was scary."

That's when Ashok's father came to know about it all. He warned his son to be careful. But the incident only made Ashok more determined. He enlisted the help of two NGOs to have those boys tutored for free in English, Hindi and Mathematics. These NGOs also helped Ashok get more kids back in school.

Besides a few supportive NGOs, OSCAR gets individual donors to sponsor his footballers, who are now part of eight teams in all age groups of the Mumbai Football League. Every child on an OSCAR team has to abide by one rule: They have to attend school regularly and stay there. “And OSCAR doesn’t want just great football players,” says Ashok. “We want good human beings.”

Today, five years after that first game, about 150 boys from Ambedkar Nagar and two neighbouring slum communities are part of the OSCAR Foundation’s football program. Thrice a week, for two exciting hours, two coaches train these youngsters. Ten dropouts, including Anil, have so far returned to school, and it is hard to figure out how many are staying on because of Ashok and the power of football.

In 2009, Ashok won a CNN-IBN “Real Hero” award and with it, a cash prize, after taxes, of 3.45 lakh. “That’s when my parents realized I was doing something worthwhile,” Ashok smiles. “My father said he was proud of me.” Ashok invested some of the money in a fixed deposit for OSCAR Foundation and registered it as a trust. He also bought a computer for the kids, purchased more football equipment and rented a tiny room in which some of the children receive extra tuitions.

Happy with the way things are going, Ashok has lately been shifting his focus on girls as well, offering to teach them football. “Having seen my boys, parents are actually sending their girls to play.” Over the past few months, 20 girls between the ages of 10 and 16 have been learning the game through OSCAR and nearly all of them now attend school regularly.

Slowly, but surely a change is taking place. Inspired by Ashok, a few more football-and-school group, modeled on OSCAR, have sprung up in Ambedkar Nagar and its two neighbouring slums. Ashok Rathod is scoring higher goals.

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Meanings in context

yelling	:	shouting
egging on	:	encouraging
sprawling	:	stretched out, big
intricacies	:	complexities
squander	:	to waste money in a foolish manner
regretted	:	felt sorry; distressed

Comprehension

I. Answer the questions given below.

1. Why do you think all the boys in both teams followed Ashok Rathod?
2. Give a brief sketch of how a person (in the lesson) realized the mistake he made in his life and how he corrected it.
3. What did the students do after they dropped out from the municipal school?
4. What made Ashok form the OSCAR group?
5. "It was scary". What was scary in the whole episode?

II. Number the paragraphs in the text passage. Now indicate the paragraphs where you can find the following ideas.

- i. Ashok taught his followers the intricacies of football.
- ii. Ashok deposited all his award money in fixed deposit for OSCAR foundation.
- iii. Although Ashok is not the most skilful player, every player accepted his directions.
- iv. When Ashok's followers failed the exam, the parents blamed Ashok.
- v. Because of Ashok and the power of football, many kids have returned to school and many are staying there.
- vi. Ashok's neighbourhood placed no value on education.
- vii. Ashok was responsible for Anil Chauhan resuming studies.
- viii. Ashok inspired many football players in the Ambedkar Nagar slums.

Vocabulary

I. Match the phrases in column 'A' with their synonyms given in column 'B'.

- | | A | | B |
|------|------------|---|------------------------|
| i. | drop out | : | insert |
| ii. | pick up | : | take up |
| iii. | slip in | : | work out |
| iv. | figure out | : | stop doing an activity |

II. Notice the following acronyms from the text.

- | | | |
|-------|---|--|
| OSCAR | → | Organization for Social Change, Awareness & Responsibility |
| NGO | → | Non Government Organization |
| CNN | → | Cable News Network |
| IBN | → | Indian Broadcasting Network |

In an acronym, the first letter of each word is taken to make a short name.

Expand the following acronyms.

- | | |
|----------|---------|
| i. FIFA | ii. IPL |
| iii. ICC | iv. SAI |
| v. SGFI | |

III. The names of some sports equipments have been jumbled up. Rearrange them.

bdmtnaion areckts

goxibn gvoles

ftbllooa

llbtksbaea

iskppngi-rpoe

snenti areckts

mbdu-llebs

hsesc-rdaob and hsescenm

esdic

lteuhts kcor

Now match the names of the equipments with the pictures given below.



Grammar

Look at the following sentences from the lesson.

1. When Ashok was a child, his father Shankar Rathod, a fisherman, regretted **that his daughter and older son had dropped out of school**
2. They'd steal or pick up fish **that had fallen from baskets**, to sell and make easy money.

Both the sentences have a clause starting with ‘that’. In the first sentence if we ask the question ‘what’ to the verb, we get the specific answer. What did the fisherman regret? ‘his daughter and older son had dropped out of school.’ Here ‘that’ introduces a noun clause which is the object to the verb regret.

In the second sentence, answer to the questions “What did they steal or pick up?” The answer is “—fish that had fallen from baskets.” Here ‘that’ is a pronoun that describes the noun ‘fish’. So in this sentence ‘that’ introduces a relative or adjective clause.

Say whether the ‘that’ clause in the sentences below are noun or relative clauses.

1. My school team that was selected for the national games had opted for red jersey.
2. The footballer said that he had been working hard to reach his goal.
3. That students were dropping out of school, was the main problem.
4. The Stadium that is being built in front of my house will be completed by next month.
5. The teacher found that his students were showing interest in playing kabaddi.
6. That the girls won the match, was a miracle.
7. The sports equipments that the boys took are to be recorded in the register.

Study Skills

Look at the score board of the Kabaddi game and answer the questions.

DEFENSIVE PERFORMANCE - DABANG DELHI vs BENGALURU BULLS			
Defender Stats			
PLAYERS	TACKLES	SUCCESSFUL TACKLES	TACKLE POINTS
GURPREET SINGH	7	5	5
SHRIKANT TEWTHIA	7	3	4
JASHMER SINGH	6	3	4
AMIT SINGH	6	2	2
DADASO BALASO AWAD	6	1	1

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1. Name the two teams.
 2. Who scored the highest and lowest tackle points in the match?
 3. Do the tackle points depend on the number of tackles or the number of successful tackles? Name the players with maximum and minimum number of tackle points.
 4. Name the players with equal tackle points.

Project Work

Ask your grandparents and 7-8 more persons of their age group in your village about the games they used to play in their childhood. List the names of the games and classify them as below.

- indoor/ outdoor games
- played in groups/ individually
- played with/ without equipment

Compare them with the games you played in your childhood.