

# Soccer clinics a joy for disadvantaged kids

By SABELO SKITI

Liverpool Football Club's youth training coaches held soccer training clinics in Hout Bay last week to the joy of young soccer players and schoolchildren from disadvantaged communities.

The Liverpool FC youth development team was in the country through an initiative between Liverpool-based Angels and Starfish creche and Foreign Fields – a local organisation that has been involved in sports training – to raise funds for the Imizamo Yethu creche. They held two coaching clinics at Meadowridge and Camps Bay and raised £5 000 for the creche which looks after 54 Imizamo Yethu children.

The group, headed by the club's community manager Bill Bygroves, taught basic football skills to more than six local teams in the area on Thursday and Friday. For most kids who were gathered at Kronendal Farm sports field in overcast and cold conditions, those days will stand out as some of their football highlights.

More importantly, the coaches passed on valuable life lessons and skills to the children through soccer. They tackled a range of issues like drug abuse, bullying, racism, and gun violence using placards and simple phrases like "Show



**SHARING:** Bill Bygroves shows the youngsters some ball skills  
Picture: JEFFREY ABRAHAMS

racism the card"; "Kick drugs into touch" and "Give bullying the boot".

The pitch, nothing more than a stretch of sand, didn't bother the kids as they worked through intricate passing and heading drills before settling down to games in small groups. Even the rain, which came down just before the end, didn't deter them from the team talk.

Creche owner Nonzwakazi Sgwentu, who, along with the Lions club of Hout Bay, the Good Hope Local Football Association, and the Hout Bay Sports Council, was instrumental in getting the clinics to

come to the kids who could not afford it, was standing on the sidelines.

She has been involved in social development projects for 18 years, and believes that sport is a good way of reaching out to kids and developing leaders.

"Though this day is wonderful for the kids, it's not only about the football. The reality is that communities like ours are still far behind when it comes to raising our kids to achieve their full potential," she said.

"This is about giving these kids something constructive to do. At the same time we can



**LIFE SKILLS:** Liverpool FC Community Manager, Bill Bygroves, shares life skills with the young soccer players at the clinic

Picture: JEFFREY ABRAHAMS

identify the special ones."

For 14-year-old Kyle Jen-nicker the day was "exciting".

"It was great playing soccer and the Liverpool coaches are really nice. We did training, passing, dribbling and controlling the ball," he said.

Another 14-year-old from the Eagle Stars football club,

the only female at the clinics and who did not want to be named, said they had learnt about more than just soccer.

"We really enjoyed ourselves and learnt a lot about bullying and drugs and other things."

Former Liverpool FC player and European cup finalist Howard Gayle, who made his

tory as the first black player for Liverpool in the 1970s, echoed these sentiments.

"I used to get a lot of racism from the fans, other players and my own teammates but I rose above it," Gayle told the kids after the training.

"Football is a great sport for (fighting against) anti-social behaviour and that is the mes-

sage we've been passing on to the clubs. It's been fantastic – since we've arrived we've been welcomed by the kids.

"I'm an African and I know how it is to be welcomed (in an African way) and one could sense that spirit with these kids."

Gayle was somewhat disappointed that their trip coin-

cided with the recent bouts of intolerance and violence that have gripped the country.

"It's truly disappointing to hear what we've heard has been happening here. It's not good to see and we've got to learn to develop and work together because incidents like this have no place in sports and no place in life."