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Soccer Evangelism



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SUPPORT PLEDGED



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Our Kikongo soccer team took a long field trip to Fadiaka to play a game. The players began walking Saturday at 1 AM under the moon. They arrived at Fadiaka late afternoon. Imagine trying to play a game after walking more than 12 hours the day before. The chief of Fadiaka is known for his powerful sorcery. The day that our team arrived at Fadiaka, a swarm of bees infested the chief's yard. Three people were stung. This was considered a bad omen. The chief pronounced that Kikongo had already won the game by three goals.

Kikongo has a reputation for not using magic. It is understood that sorcery fights against sorcery. Those who use sorcery are always looking for more powerful charms. If one party does not use magic, then the powerful magic of the opponent has nothing to deal with. This renders the magic useless. Our team does not rely on magic. We have a team chaplain to keep the players from straying into sorcery. Normally when villages play against each other, the visiting team spends the night in a neighboring village, and not the village where the game is to be played. This is so that the village sorcery can't get them during the night. Our team, however, spent Saturday night at Fadiaka, and spent much of the night praying out loud. That seemed to intimidate many of the villagers. The chief claimed that he tried all night to confront our team's sorcery, but his pursuit turned up empty. There wasn't any sorcery to be found. He wasn't able to manipulate the spirits that could influence the outcome of the game.

When it came to game time, our team took to the field, and so did Fadiaka's team. All the players were ready and eager to play. The field had been fenced off with palm branches so that spectators had to pay an entrance fee to view the match. People had come from far and wide to watch the game between two rivals. They had begun to sell tickets to the game days before. The chief however said the game could not be played since Fadiaka was bound to lose badly. So after walking all that way, there was no game. The chief had too much of his authority vested in the outcome of the match. The only way to save face was to not play at all.

People were surprised that Kikongo's youth had "powerful magic" that confounded even an elder chief. Stories began to be made up about why the Kikongo team was so powerful. The players arrived with bottled water. At springs along the way, they could refill the bottles. The story went around that what they were really drinking was Ocean water that the missionary Glen Chapman had given the team. Somehow the ocean water is considered powerful. The Kikongo team however insisted, "We don't use magic or sorcery. We believe that God is more powerful than the forces of sorcery." The enslavement to sorcery is so counter to progress. Soccer games among the youth become power battles to affirm the so called spiritual power of the sorcerers. I think that our soccer team taught the people of Fadiaka a powerful lesson. It wasn't a sermon preached, but they had the confidence to proclaim that sorcery need only be feared by those who use sorcery. Even the young people need not fear the witchcraft of the elders if their confidence is in the living God.