



Players proudly show of the shirts



Children in South Africa wearing the recently arrived Sinnott 25 shirts

Sinnott 25 shirts in South Africa

By Claire Lomax

01943 607022

THE tragic death of professional footballer Jordan Sinnott in 2020 gave rise to the now famous "Shirts for Jordan" campaign.

An idea that was initially discussed around the Sinnott kitchen table went global. It was hoped that a few shirts would be donated by some professional clubs in memory of Jordan for children in need. Very quickly all the Premier League, Championship and Football League clubs had donated shirts bearing Jordan's name and age – Sinnott 25.

The world of football responded nationally and then internationally. More than 882 shirts from professional, amateur, youth and school teams were donated from more than 28 different countries. The shirts have now gone around the world to some of the poorest children who love the game of football and other sports.

Jordan was a great supporter of the Bambisanani Partnership that started in his former school, St Mary's, Menston. For the last 16 years the multi-award-winning charity has worked in one of South Africa's most deprived rural areas in KwaZulu-Natal using the power of sport to change lives. David Geldart, who founded the partnership, had worked with Jordan since he was at primary school through to him becoming a professional footballer.

Sinnott 25 shirts have recently arrived at two Bambisanani schools in South Africa, Mnyakanya High School and Vumanhlanvu Primary School, where they are being used for football, netball and PE lessons.

David said: "When I first visited South Africa it was remarkable to see just how important football was to the Zulu community. My first experience was watching a large group of



Jordan Sinnott

youngsters playing barefoot on rough ground using plastic bags tied together as their football. Despite few homes having electricity or TVs, the children had an amazing knowledge of world football and, in particular, the Premier League.

"Over the years, in partnership with the local community, we have been able bring some much-needed football equipment to the area to develop the game and coach education. In addition to this, we also use football-based resources to promote literacy and numeracy in schools.

"To have a 'real' football shirt is something incredibly special for these children and perhaps more appreciated than in more affluent parts of the world where such a possession can all too often be taken for granted.

"Jordan cared about many things and he was certainly very taken with our work in South Africa and the power of

sport to make a real difference in the world. Jordan's mum, Mel, gave the partnership 100 of these shirts for South Africa, but Covid struck and effectively stopped our visits for almost two and a half years. I didn't dare risk posting such precious cargo and wanted the shirts to be delivered in person by some of our team, which we were able to do recently.

"It is absolutely amazing what joy and excitement these shirts have brought to Mnyakanya High School and Vumanhlanvu Primary School, both set in the remote rural hills of Nkandla. The impact is simply phenomenal and really has to be seen to be believed. Jordan would have loved to see this and I know how much this amazing legacy means to Jordan's family."

William Vilakazi, principal of Vumanhlanvu Primary School, said: "It is an absolute honour to have these famous shirts that remember Jordan in our school.

"We serve a very poor community where sports equipment is difficult to come by. These shirts will be kept at the school and used by different learners for sports; we will use them for soccer matches as well.

"We have annual awards in memory of Jordan and the football shirts will be a constant reminder about striving to be the best that you can be. These shirts connect young people globally in sport; what a wonderful legacy that is for Jordan and his family."

Tom Sinnott, Jordan's brother, said: "To have young people in South Africa with the Sinnott name on their backs makes our whole family very proud."

A book has been produced which includes photographs of all the shirts donated. All proceeds go to the Jordan Sinnott Foundation Trust. Visit js25.co.uk/OurBook for more.

For more about the Bambisanani Partnership, visit bambisananipartnership.org