

# Are you using a soccer ball made by child workers?

by Greg Winkler, author of:  
"Coaching a Season of Significance"

With the World Cup of Soccer behind us, many teams will be heading back to the drawing board and see what changes they will have to make before 2014. Games will be dissected, players will be tossed aside, coaches will be replaced and the qualifying process will start all over again.

The teams are not the only people that will be evaluating the World Cup; many businesses will be scrutinizing their advertising, their sponsorship, their effect on the Cup.

FIFA and the world had many concerns about the South African venue. Was the country safe enough? How much negative attention will be drawn to the working and living conditions of the African people? Would these issues, which are part of the African nation, overshadow the soccer event?

It will be years before all this information is tabulated and processed.

One organization that is not waiting, has already been working on bringing awareness to working conditions and pay worldwide. It is called Fair Trade. Fair Trade is an organized social movement and takes a market-based approach. Fair Trade looks to help producers in third world countries obtain better working and trading conditions.

You are asking yourself – what does this have to do with soccer?

As you may or may not know, many of the soccer balls you purchase for your children are made by children in India and Pakistan. These "children" work long hours stitching soccer balls for pennies a day. Since this child labor scandal broke in the late 1990s, India has cracked down on the child labor and there appears to be improvement in that country but the child labor still exists. Pakistan has not buckled under any political pressure or public awareness and the practice continues to be widespread in that country.

Wages paid to adults in many third world countries do not provide enough for a family to live on. Children are forced into low paying jobs to help provide for the family. Not only is the pay low, the working conditions are mind-boggling. These job conditions leave no time for school, friends, sport participa-

tion, or even free time. While our children run around on the soccer fields, children their same age are working their fingers numb stitching balls.

In Fond du Lac, we have a business that specializes in selling items that are produced or manufactured by paying a fair wage. The business is the Just Fare Market, specializing in Fair Trade Goods. They are located at 1225 4th St., and can be found on the web at [www.justfare.org](http://www.justfare.org).

Stop in at Just Fare if you are looking for a new soccer ball, made available by Fair Trade Sports. Other sports balls including basketball, football and rugby balls are made available to the US market through Fair Trade Sports. The balls are eco-certified sports balls. The sample soccer ball I was able to test out is a nice looking ball and very well-crafted, and I am guaranteed the person that made it was paid a fair wage.

Carol Smith, board president for Just Fare states, "Just as we want our children in school and participating in sports as part of their extracurricular time and development, children in Pakistan and other places in the world should also have that opportunity. That will only happen when their parents are paid a fair wage for their employment, including those people who work stitching soccer balls. There is something very wrong with poor kids in Pakistan sewing balls for American children."

If you are interested in one of these balls they are available in Fond du Lac at Just Fare Market. If you have a team that is interested in larger quantities of these balls, check out [www.fairtradesports.com](http://www.fairtradesports.com). If you are interested in more information about Fair Trade, you can check out the websites I provided and search the pages for more info.

Things will only improve when we all take a step back and take a look at the global picture. How many of us really look at the products we buy and consider their origin and what that means? If you pick up a dress made in Pakistan, you know little fingers were working on that item. What about China? Korea? The list goes on and on. Do you put it back on the rack and look for something else? Maybe it is time to take a look? You can start by taking a trip out 4th Street and visiting the Just Fare Market.



*Fond du Lac's "Mr. Soccer," Greg Winkler, urges consumers to look at the sources of products and backs the movement by Fair Trade, which helps producers in third world countries obtain better working and trading conditions.*

## FAIR TRADE FOR EVERY ROOM



**Thurs.-Sat. 9:30-1:30;  
Second Sun. 9:00-noon**  
1225 4<sup>th</sup> St. • Fond du Lac  
(in First Presbyterian Church)  
**920-322-3334 • [www.justfare.org](http://www.justfare.org)**

**Fair Trade: Good for People - Good for the Earth**