

Hi there and welcome to As It Is, a daily magazine show from VOA Learning English. I'm June Simms in Washington.

American football is the most popular sport in the United States. But soccer, which is widely known as football in most areas, is recognized as the most popular sport in the world.

Our show today is all about football! We begin with the return of international football in Afghanistan. Bob Doughty reports.

## **International Football Returns to Afghanistan**

Afghanistan's national football team played neighboring Pakistan earlier this month. The Afghan team defeated the Pakistanis 3-0. It was the first international football match played in Kabul in 10 years. Afghan and Pakistani officials hope the increased sporting ties will help to ease political tensions between the two countries.

The two sides described the game as a "Friendship Match." It was played in a newly-built sports center in Kabul. It was the first game between the national teams of Afghanistan and Pakistan in 36 years. It also marked the return of international football to Afghanistan since 2003. All 6,000 stadium seats were filled for the event.

After play ended, officials on both sides said the match was a strong sign of improving cultural and sporting relations.

The Afghan ambassador to Pakistan, Mohammad Umer Doudzai, told VOA that the two countries need to improve these ties even more. He said this would also help strengthen anti-militancy efforts on both sides of the border.

“Our cricket team is born ((in refugee camps)) in Pakistan and trained and coached mostly by Pakistani team. Maybe soon they will defeat Pakistan. These are all civilized interactions. And the uncivilized interaction is those ((militant)) sanctuaries, those suicide vests, those bombs, those explosives. We have to get rid of that. We have to replace the uncivilized interaction with the civilized interaction.”

A week before the game, Afghan President Hamid Karzai made a visit to Pakistan. He urged Pakistani officials to help with peace talks between his country and the Taliban. I’m Bob Doughty.

You are listening to As It Is, from VOA Learning English. I’m June Simms.

## **Pakistani Immigrant Makes Mark in US National Football League**

Nearly every team in the National Football League is owned by someone born in the United States. Now, a man from Pakistan is part of the league’s ownership group.

In fact, he's the only ethnic minority member ever to own an NFL team. Faith Lapidus has more.

Shahid Kahn is one of the most recognizable names in Jacksonville, Florida. The 63-year-old American businessman owns the city's NFL team: the Jacksonville Jaguars.

Like the other owners, Shahid Khan is wealthy. But his life story is very different. He grew up in Pakistan, where cricket is the national sport. He fell in love with American football after he moved to the United States.

Mr. Kahn is from Lahore, Pakistan. The Jaguars' owner says he was seeking an "education, fame and fortune" when he came to the United States in 1967. He had \$500 when he arrived, and earned \$1.20 an hour for washing dishes.

"Working for \$1.20 was absolutely a very, very liberating experience for me, and I think what was wonderful was that it happened literally a day after I got here. The most powerful thing was, 'Hey, I'm empowered, and I control my destiny so I can be who I want to be.' And certainly the life I knew before that in Pakistan and really the rest of the world, frankly, you didn't have that opportunity."

Mr. Khan settled in the state of Illinois. He attended the University of Illinois while working at Flex-N-Gate, which makes automobile parts. He bought the company in 1980 and turned it into a more than \$3 billion business with 50 factories worldwide.

His interest in American football began while taking classes at the University of Illinois, which has a big football program.

“I just loved it because it is simple in a way, and then it is so complex. The minute you think you’ve understood something, you haven’t. So, I don’t have the athletic makeup to play the game, so I watched it, been a huge fan, and then as time went on I thought maybe there’d be a day I could own a team.”

That day would come. After failing in an effort to buy the NFL’s St. Louis Rams, he bought the Jaguars for a reported \$760 million in late 2011.

Mr. Khan says he is living the American dream.

“I think this is the finest country on planet Earth, period, and what you’re going to be able to accomplish with your life on this planet, your best chance, best opportunity is right here in the U.S.”

He says his story is an example of that kind of success. I’m Faith Lapidus.

## American Soccer Fans Increasing

Soccer is increasingly popular across the United States. And a nonprofit group called the American Outlaws is working to make it even more popular.

The group is working hard to strengthen support for the U.S. Men's National Soccer Team. It has become increasingly organized and claims 7,000 paying members with clubs in more than 80 American cities.

The DC chapter in Washington is the largest.

On this day, hundreds of Outlaws and their friends have gathered at RFK Stadium in Washington for a game between the United States and Germany.

"We are the U.S.! The mighty, mighty U.S., the mighty, mighty U.S.!"

Many Outlaws say they feel like outsiders in a country where other professional sports are more popular. National president, Korey Donahoo, says that is how the group got its name.

"You feel kind of like an outsider because soccer is not a mainstream sport necessarily, so we thought 'American Outlaws' worked well for what we were trying to do."

“It’s the United States. We are winning the game. Ooooooh!”

In this game against Germany, the U.S. held on for a 4-3 victory.

U.S. goalkeeper Tim Howard was excited about the sellout crowd.

“To see a big massive stadium, a historic stadium for us, U.S. soccer-wise, to be filled and to play a team like Germany, it is special because we have not always gotten that. But it has grown and I think it is a testament to our supporters.”

And that is As It Is. I’m June Simms in Washington.

Have a question or comment about our show? Email us at [learningenglish@voanews.com](mailto:learningenglish@voanews.com).