

German sportswear firms adidas and Puma have put behind them a feud that has lasted more than 60 years to take part in the Peace One Day programme.

# Puma and adidas leave bad feelings on the bench

*Samuel Eto'o, who plays for Serie A team Inter and in the Cameroon national team, lends his support to the anti-violence campaign.*

 Puma

**O**n September 21, rival sports brands adidas and Puma put their hostilities behind them for the day to host Peace One Day. The not-for-profit Peace One Day initiative, founded by actor and film maker Jeremy Gilley, is supported by all United Nations member states and aims to bring about a whole day that is completely free of conflict and war. On the day, staff from the two German sportswear giants agreed to take part in a game of football followed by a viewing of Mr Gilley's film, 'The Day after Peace'.

Brothers Rudolf and Adolf (Adi) Dassler worked alongside their father in a shoe factory as young men and set up their own sports footwear production company called Gebrüder Dassler Schuhfabrik in 1924. And, having started production on a very small scale, the 1936 Berlin Olympics catapulted the brand to fame when Adi Dassler convinced US sprinter Jesse Owens, who went on to win four gold medals at the event, to wear a pair of the company's shoes. Supplying other athletes at the Olympics including members of the German football team, the tally of medals for wearers of the Dassler shoes totalled seven gold and five bronze medals.

However, working so closely together, disagreements between the two brothers started to spring up and they decided to go their separate ways in 1948. Adi Dassler formed adidas and Rudolf established Ruda, which became Puma Schuhfabrik Rudolf Dassler later that year. Both remained in their home town, Herzogenaurach in Germany.

The rivalry not only affected the brothers, but it had far-reaching implications across the Bavarian town. Support for the two new brands was completely divided, and even the two local football teams, ASV Herzogenaurach and IFC Herzogenaurach, wore opposing brands. The companies have always remained earnest rivals



and competitors and had not worked together again in any capacity before the recent match.

### Playing the game

Led out by the two companies' chief executives—adidas' Herbert Hainer, who played in midfield, and Puma's Jochen Zeitz, who took the position of goalkeeper—40 employees from both firms and a few local journalists took to the field. Rather than playing against each other, the teams comprised a mix of staff members from each company. And there was plenty of action at both ends of the pitch with the black team finally beating the white team by seven goals to five.

After more than 60 years of rivalry, the two CEOs went against all convention when they shook hands prior to kick-off, but both said they realised how important it was to unite for such an important cause. "The symbolic handshake of adidas and Puma helped to raise awareness for Global Peace Day and the necessity for non-violence and ceasefire," they said in a joint statement. They described the game as "a unique experience for the participating players and our employees. It showed that everyone—and companies as well—can make their contribution to peace."

"We firmly believe that sport can bring the world together," says Mr Hainer. "Sport has shown this on countless occasions in the past and we are committed to the positive values found in sport: performance and passion, teamwork and fair play."

A special kit was created for the match featuring Puma's leaping cat image and adidas' three stripe logo. The kit is part of a limited collection containing just 80 pieces, which will be auctioned with proceeds going to support Peace One Day. Alexander Hleb, who plays for German Bundesliga team VfB Stuttgart and captains the Belarus national team, supported the initiative by signing autographs and giving out Peace One Day footballs to fans.

### Making a difference

The match took place at the adidas headquarters, followed by a viewing of the film at Puma's brand centre in Nuremberg. The Day after Peace' is an award-winning documentary film that charts Jeremy Gilley's 10-year journey before his vision of holding Peace Day on September 21 was realised. It follows his travels around the world in a bid to win support for the initiative. It also features footage of actor Jude Law in Afghanistan spearheading a vaccination programme against polio that he hopes will take place on Peace Day some time in the future.

Mr Zeitz made his motives for getting involved in this peace campaign alongside adidas very clear. He said on the day of the event: "We are uniting on this day as a



commitment to Peace Day. Our common goal being that our collaboration today will help create awareness for the day."

He believes that even taking small stands against violence can have a major impact. He says: "Kofi Anan once said that 'individuals can make a difference and collectively we can make a major contribution'. I believe that is the case also for companies. And our unity, in support of Peace Day, is a small step in a positive direction as well as an expression of the united power of sport in a world which we are all responsible for."

The two teams actually started promoting Peace One Day prior to the event. During two German league matches—FC Bayern Munich versus FC Nuremberg, and VfB Stuttgart against FC Cologne—employees from the two firms took part in surprise penalty shootouts at halftime. Goalkeeper coach and former Bundesliga player Walter Junghans also took part and handed out footballs to fans.

However, despite their joint efforts in support of the campaign, it seems unlikely this gesture of goodwill will bring about a closer commercial or personal relationship between the two sportswear firms. According to Forbes, an adidas spokesperson said: "This is a one-off project with no plans of further cooperation. There will be no joint ventures or activities." 

*CEOs Herbert Hainer from adidas (left) and Jochen Zeitz from Puma (right). The historic handshake puts more than 60 years of rivalry behind the two companies.*

 adidas