

# Exploration on the Role of Football Volunteers in the Development of Grassroots Football

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**Abstract:** According to the investigations, at this stage, the number of Chinese football volunteers is low; the propaganda of football volunteers needs to be strengthened; the activity and legal guarantee mechanism of football volunteers need to be improved, and a reasonable and comprehensive effective system has not been formed yet. Relevant departments shall formulate practical and feasible activity mechanisms in light of the actual local conditions; a systematic training system for football volunteers needs to be established.

**Keywords:** Football, Volunteers, Grassroots development

## 1. Introduction

Chinese football is widely known and has a long history. Historical records illustrate that China had its own football team as early as 1901. In the 1920s and 1930s, Chinese football was at the top level in Asia. However, due to war and political issues, Chinese football has gone from a peak to a decline. Regard to this, numerous Chinese experts and scholars have done a lot of detailed research on the reasons.

## 2. Current status and analysis of the investigation results of China's grassroots football development

The football coaches are a very serious issue in the development of Chinese football. "The practice of more than 50 years has proven that knowledge and understanding of modern football by Chinese coaches is not only superficial, but also has a huge gap with foreign football thoughts and practice, sometimes even go against it." Before the Reform and Opening-up, the communication between China and the rest of the world was still relatively blocking. Therefore, a certain gap between the ideas and teaching methods of many Chinese football coaches and the world-class ones is still existing.

The reserve talents problem of public football is also one of the important reasons restricting the development of Chinese football. "The collapse of the entire youth system lies in deformed development of the inverted pyramid of Chinese football. Due to backward training concepts, the basic skills of young players are getting worse. The situation of no successor has appeared in Chinese football." "(China has) 1.3 billion people as well as 250 million teenagers, but the number of youth football population is only 30,000." As the saying goes, "Water can carry a boat and sink it too", the attitude of Chinese public towards football determines the level of football development in China. For the present situation, Chinese public also has to reflect on it to some extent.

The lack of its own characteristics is also a reason for no improvement in Chinese football. Throughout the world football, every strong team must possess its own style. "Latin America football has an artistic style, England has a long ball style of football, German football also has its specific features." However, in China, a unique style of football has not been formed. As a matter of fact, a new coach will lead to a new way of playing. Thus, football style and features in China haven't had an independent system.

By comparing and analyzing the former studies and conclusions of experts and scholars, it is clear that the research results of scholars on the development problems of grassroots football in China are basically the same. By summarizing several reasons for unbalanced development of Chinese football, they are: Lack of football coaches, referees and football practitioners; teenagers' parents do not have

enough understanding of football, and the football atmosphere among teenagers is insufficient; there is a shortage of talented football reserves; there is a gap between constraint professional knowledge of the grassroots coaches and the advanced concept of football development of the high-level coaches.

### **3. Contrastive study and analysis of the current status of the development of sports volunteers in China**

Volunteers are defined by the United Nations as: "Activists who voluntarily perform social public interest services without gaining any benefits, money, or fame." Sports volunteers play a very important role in the sports field, and the activities of volunteers in each region and country are various. In China, "there are no relevant laws and regulations at the present stage; the encouragement and recognition system for volunteers has not been established, which is a big challenge to the enthusiasm and positivity of volunteers. Some related organizational measures of activities, management mechanisms, as well as spiritual and cultural construction are still in the preliminary stage".

"The composition of volunteer organization staff is relatively simple, and the majority of the members are college students and young people. Moreover, the number of people who regularly participate in volunteer services is relatively small.

Currently, there are more than 3,000 volunteer social sports instructors in Shanghai Pudong New District. In March 2003, the Guangzhou Youth Volunteers Association set up a Sports Volunteer Service Group, which now includes 456 volunteers. By the end of 2006, Guangzhou Youth Volunteers Association had provided nearly 50,000 hours of high-quality volunteer service for 13 international competitions with more than 10,000 person-time."

Football volunteer systems have been developed for more than 100 years, therefore, football volunteer systems overseas are very mature. According to the literature, as early as 1896, there was already a football volunteer organization in England. The volunteer activities in major countries mainly have three features: Firstly, they rely on social organizations to carry out voluntary football activities; secondly, they are funded by the national government, social organizations, and donations from individuals; thirdly, some high technology offers satisfactory volunteering projects for volunteers.

In foreign countries, voluntary sports organizations have a wide range of forms, but generally, they can be divided into two categories. The first one is the "Youth Volunteer Organization", aimed at training young people; the other is a religious organization that serves sports for the general public. In the United States, there is also a volunteer award to recognize outstanding contributions made by volunteers. At the same time, the government also promulgated a voluntary service law, set up scholarships and subsidies. With this, volunteers can be compensated according to the value of their contributions.

However, in China, the development of volunteer activities started relatively late. Furthermore, affected by historical, cultural and economic factors, volunteer activities have been developing slowly all the time, and the number of sports volunteers is limited. China's volunteer organizations can be divided into three categories: Community Volunteer Service Organizations, China Youth Volunteers Association and Environmental Protection Volunteer Organizations, whereas the recruitment and training of sports volunteers in China has not formed a comprehensive system yet. In addition to some large competitions with rewards, other volunteer activities do not have means of recognition or encouragement, as a result, plenty of volunteers have no interest in volunteering. Besides, China has yet to introduce detailed laws and regulations that specifically apply to volunteers and provide them with effective legal protection either. According to statistics, as of 2015, the total number of registered volunteers in China has reached 30.47 million, while the number of registered volunteers in the United States has already reached 60.8 million in 2007. At present, there are still many problems in the development of Chinese sports volunteers overall. Compared with developed countries, there is a certain gap between China's sports volunteer service activities in terms of organization, laws and regulations, as well as the number of participants. In 1999, Guangdong Province passed the "Guangdong Province Youth Volunteer Service Regulations", which was the first local voluntary service regulation. After that, various provinces and cities successively promulgated local volunteer regulations. As a result, voluntary services have gradually received more attention from the public, especially after the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, sports volunteer activities have reached a new level of improvement. Nowadays, the gap between China and developed countries is slowly narrowing, which indirectly indicates that China's comprehensive national strength is growing stronger.

#### **4. The role of football volunteers in the development of grassroots football**

##### ***4.1 The alleviation of football volunteers to solve the lack of football coaches at the grassroots level***

The lack of professional football coaches is currently a prominent problem faced by grassroots football. In this regard, China has also taken a lot of measures, such as hiring foreign teachers and retired players during the 1970s and 1980s. However, due to historical reasons, there are still some deficiencies. Therefore, the emergence of football volunteers provides a potential opportunity to solve this problem. According to General-Secretary Xi Jinping, "China has first-class football fans and world-renowned football." The characteristic of volunteers is mass public, most of them are composed of sports enthusiasts, fans, or football enthusiasts in society or colleges. This provides the possibility to solve the shortage of volunteer football coaches.

On account of large population base of football volunteers, talents suitable for coaching can be selected among them. Besides, football volunteers have a certain degree of understanding of football rules, technology, game systems, and teaching methods. They often possess basic knowledge of football to some extent and have a high sense of enthusiasm and responsibility. Moreover, football volunteers are mostly composed of young people, who have high plasticity and ideological awareness, which made them good at learning some professional theories, concepts and techniques. Since they have not received "professional training" before, they will not resist some foreign or more advanced theories and opinions, unlike some old-generation coaches, who are easily imprisoned by outdated ideas.

##### ***4.2 The role of football volunteers in promoting grassroots football atmosphere***

According to statistics, by the end of December 2013, there were only 50,000 soccer players registered with the Chinese Football Association, and only 7,000 youth soccer players among them. During the same period, the number of football players under the age of 18 registered by the Japanese Football Association has already reached 500,000. Based on this, it is clear that China's grassroots football reserve talent is very short.

The inadequate atmosphere of grassroots football is an important factor leading to the extreme lack of reserve talents for grassroots football in China. The repeated failures of Chinese teams in major games have caused a large number of people to lose confidence in Chinese football. There was once a story: After the Chinese football team lost a game, the son of a father who liked football said that he also wanted to play football in the future. However, his father answered that Chinese football was so terrible, and it's useless for him to play. In fact, many people in China have the same opinion. They used to love football, but due to persistent disappointment with Chinese football, they no longer pay attention to it. Moreover, this attitude also influences the next generation, and it is harder for their children to participate in football activities. In such a vicious circle, the atmosphere of football is continuously getting terrible. Therefore, in order to solve the problem of insufficient grassroots football atmosphere, football volunteers must make full use of their own characteristics of wide distribution and large population base to promote football by positive example through themselves. Chairman Mao once said a single spark can start a prairie fire. In this case, the grassroots football atmosphere can be gradually improved.

At the same time, vast network of volunteers can be organized to cooperate with some enterprises, clubs, and non-governmental football organizations to hold more football matches and set up awards, so as to arouse the public's interest in football, expand the influence of football at the grassroots level and improve the atmosphere of football.

Volunteers should also carry out more publicity on football. Public places such as schools, squares and communities can be used by them to make speeches and popularize the knowledge of football. Some websites and other platforms can also be used to promote football knowledge. As a result, the state's determination to develop football can be transmitted to the general public, and their current dissatisfaction and suspicion toward Chinese football can be changed.

#### **5. Conclusions**

The number of football volunteers is small; the propaganda of football volunteers is not enough and needs to be improved.

The activity mechanism and legal guarantee mechanism of football volunteers still have some inadequacies and need to be improved.

The training of football volunteers has not formed a reasonable and comprehensive system.

## 6. Recommendations

To improve the propaganda of football volunteers, some advanced theories and understandings need to be popularized to the general public. The breadth and depth of propaganda can be increased by means of banners, posters, radio broadcasts, and text messages. The incentive mechanism and reward system, such as the establishment of the "Sports Dedication Award" and "Excellent Volunteers" by the government can encourage the general public to participate in more activities.

Relevant departments should take action and work out practical mechanisms based on local conditions, such as setting up a football volunteers' association, and then coordinate the arrangement of volunteer activities through the association. The government should introduce laws and regulations to protect the rights and interests of football volunteers, such as the "Law on the Protection of Football Volunteers" and the "Rules for the Activities of Football Volunteers".

A systematic training system for football volunteers need to be established, such as training classes for football volunteers, which summon volunteers to attend classes on holidays or in the evening. Through this, the service level and quality of volunteers through class-system collective tutoring can be improved.

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