



Hear my story

Experiencing racism is scary. But I'm not going to let any racists stop me from playing the game I love.

My name's Balraj. I'm Sikh. I wear a Judo because it's part of my religion.

I was seven. I was going to my first football camp, really looking forward to it. It went all wrong. Eating my lunch in the changing rooms at this camp, and then the older boys, taller than me, came up to me, shouted at me, saying 'Where are you from?' and then I said 'England.' They just said 'You can't be from England. Seriously, you must be born in India or somewhere else, somewhere far away.'

One of them was, like, sort of telling them what to do – pulling my hair, grabbing it, shaking their bums at me, they were calling me names.

First I felt surprised. I was like 'How can anyone act and be as horrid as this?' Then, after that, came the scaredness. Cos I didn't know what to do. So the coach took me outside, said 'What's happening? Are these kids bullying you?' I said 'Yeah' and then he said 'OK'. He didn't do anything about it. Nothing happened. The kids carried on.

The first thing I did when I saw my dad was I told him that someone had grabbed my Judo. I was really upset. I was in tears. Then when we came home, I just wanted to be by myself for a bit. I was scared to go back and, yeah, I couldn't go back.

My dad encouraged me to try another camp a year later.

I went for one day, thought 'Great!' I really liked it. But then the next day, a different person, again older than me, went for my Judo. This time I knew it was racism. I had had to prepare myself cos I knew it was a common thing. I knew it was going to happen again. I reacted straight away. Went to the coach. The coach was good. Did something about it this time. Though after that I knew that something had to be done to try and stop racism in football and in society.

Video zone





I decided to act. I joined the equality council at my school. When I hear about other kids that have experienced racism, it just makes me even more hungry to want to do something about it. We all have a responsibility, but something more needs to be done. Monkey chants in Premier League games, that just makes me feel really upset that anyone in this day and age can be as horrible and racist and rude as that.

If you've ever experienced racism in football, and it's stopped you from playing football, just try again.

I went to my third football camp this year and play every week.

You know what I've realised? Racism is the racist's problem. Not mine. Their problem. They need to stop it. Not my problem.

Watch this video <https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/video-zone/hear-my-story>

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