



What's going on?

Primary school pupils around the UK have been writing letters of support to England players who were the targets of online abuse following the Euro 2020 final. The three players who missed penalties in the shoot-out that decided the tournament; Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka, became victims of racist attacks on social media within minutes of the match finishing. Lots of people have condemned the racist comments and actions, which were targeted at the three footballers including England manager Gareth Southgate, prime minister Boris Johnson and Prince William.

Question:

Can our kindness and compassion make us stronger?

Listen, think, share

- Look at the poster image and ask if anyone knows who is on it and what they think we might be discussing. Explain that the image features England Manager Gareth Southgate and England player Bukayo Saka, following his missed penalty at the final of the European Championships on Sunday. Think about how he must have felt missing the penalty and the pressure he must have been under. Explain that two other players, Rashford and Sancho also missed their penalties, resulting in England losing to Italy in the match. Do we know anything else about these players? Think about some of the positive work outside football that we may be aware of, e.g., Rashford's campaign for free school meals and his inspiring reading initiative. Talk about the importance and the impact of using their voices in such positive ways.
- Explain that after the match ended, many racist attacks appeared online against the three players and a mural for Marcus Rashford in his hometown was vandalised. Talk about how abhorrent and unacceptable this is and what we should do if we become aware of racism in any form.
- When asked about the online attacks, Manager Gareth Southgate said, "It's just not what we stand for. The players have had such a great togetherness and spirit and brought our country together, for some of them to be abused is unforgivable... We have been a beacon of light to bring people together and the national team stands for everybody. We have shown the power our country has when it does come together and has that energy and positivity together." Discuss what you think Southgate means.
- Presenter Susanna Reid from 'Good Morning Britain' read out a post shared by Marcus Rashford on social media after the match, which read, "I don't even know where to start and I don't even know how to put into words how I am feeling at this exact time. I've had a difficult season; I think that's been clear for everyone to see and I probably went into that final with a lack of confidence. I've always backed myself for a penalty, but something didn't feel quite right. During the long run-up I was saving myself a bit of time and unfortunately the result was not what I wanted." Listening to this, how does it make you feel? Have you ever been in a similar situation?
- Read through the letter found on the useful resource (and on the useful video) from 9-year-old Dexter and Marcus Rashford's response following the match. How do you think Marcus will have felt reading letters like Dexter's? How do you think they may have helped him? Marcus Rashford responded to the messages with, "For all the kind messages, thank you. I'll be back stronger. We'll be back stronger." Talk about the impact of our words and actions and how our kindness and compassion can affect those around us.

Reflection

In the words of England Manager Gareth Southgate, "We have been a beacon of light to bring people together and the national team stands for everybody. We have shown the power our country has when it does come together and has that energy and positivity."

Web Links

Useful video – 9-year-old Dexter's letter to Marcus Rashford

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKO7TFOTYrQ>

Letters to footballers' news story

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-somerset-57809586>