

K! Kävelyfutis

Guidebook for Walking Football

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Foreword

Walking football is a wonderful, low-threshold team sport. Here in Finland, it is already played by dozens of social and health care sector organisations. Walking football is a beautiful game. We wish to encourage you, dear reader, to try the sport and get involved!

This guidebook provides the information necessary for sufficient understanding of the sport as well as comprehensive instructions on how to launch and lead a walking football team and walking football activities in your area. Our aim was to keep the guidebook as simple and concise as possible. Launching, operating, and coaching walking football as a hobby is easy and fun! No previous experience in football or coaching is required. The most important thing is a positive and courageous attitude and, most of all, a willingness to try something new.

The instructions of this guidebook are not set in stone. They are invented and intended for your support as a coach or a leader and may be applied freely as you see fit. The most important thing in walking football is the sense of belonging, being together, and having a great time! The main goal is that everyone enjoys the training sessions and being a part of the team. When this goal is fulfilled, the coaching is sure to be successful regardless of whether the boundaries of the field were drawn incorrectly or whether one of the rules was forgotten during a match.

Best wishes and lots of enthusiasm for the games,

Aapo Kotkavuori

Project Manager
Walking football project

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Introduction

Walking football - What and why?

Walking football is a team sport developed on the basis of football in the early 2010s, characterised by a low starting threshold and high accessibility. Walking football does not allow running, forceful tackling, nor is the ball allowed to be kicked above head height. This makes the sport a great form of exercise for people for whom regular team sports are not usually suitable, for example, due to excessive speed.

WALKING FOOTBALL – A LOW-THRESHOLD TEAM BALL SPORT. The main purpose of the sport is to give those for whom running and high-impact sports are not suitable a chance to take part in a team ball sport. The rules of the sport have been developed so that as many people as possible can take part. When planning the activities and operations of your team, always consider how you could develop the sport further, and maybe apply the rules so that anyone

that is willing to participate is able to do so. The rules do not have to be followed precisely. If necessary, tackling can be banned altogether, the limits of where the ball is allowed to be kicked can be lowered and the pace of the game can be further slowed down if, by doing so, more people are able to participate.

Walking is a lighter form of exercise than running. Thanks to a calmer pace of play and low-impact contact situations, the sport is effortless to get started. It is easy to get involved even if you were in poor physical condition or if a lot of time has passed since you last had a sports-related hobby. Thanks to the possible modifications of the rules, the differences in the players' personal skills and/or physical condition are not significantly consequential. All this makes the game smoother to play as well as more meaningful and fun for all participants. When football is played while walking, the importance of team play is further emphasised: selfish play is not successful, and participants must actively take one another into account.

WALKING FOOTBALL SUPPORTING THE SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE SECTOR. The benefits of walking football are numerous for clients in the social and health care





sector. Walking football promotes mental, physical, and social well-being. The sport is suitable for nearly everyone. In walking football, formal titles and statuses stay firmly in the background. Furthermore, the gap between the traditional leader/instructor vs. client/patient dynamic is diminished or at least changes significantly. Moreover, a match or practice of walking football is the perfect chance of networking when a lot of people from various organisations get together.

According to **a player survey** commissioned by the walking football project in 2019, the most important matters in walking football were the new teammates, being able to develop one's physical condition, and sobriety. Eighty-two percent of those surveyed shared that they had made new friends through the hobby. Eighty-one percent of respondents reported that their physical condition had improved, and 58 percent said that their days spent sober had significantly increased.

The survey also featured questions on how walking football has affected a player's

self-esteem and self-knowledge on and off the field. More than 90 percent of the respondents felt that the courage to encounter (new) people increased with their adoption of the hobby. Eighty-four percent learned to trust their own abilities more than before. The number of relevant interpersonal relationships was also reported to have increased (80%), and in addition to walking football, the amount of other fitness sports in which respondents participated also increased (69%).

"By playing walking football and by being a part of the team, I now feel like I am capable of doing something, whereas in school I always felt inferior to everyone else."

"I feel like I am exceeding myself mentally and physically every time I practice and play."

"I like playing walking football with a good team without having to stress about anything. Women and men fit well in the same field."

(Walking Football Project Player Survey, 2019)



HISTORY OF WALKING FOOTBALL. In its current form, walking football has been played since 2011, when Chesterfield Senior Spireites, an exercise group for people over 55 years of age, was started in England. The first matches were played in a three-on-three framework with no goalkeepers and no more specific rules. However, the team's popularity grew at a rapid pace, so the number of field players was adjusted upwards and official rules ratified by the English Football Association were also written for the sport. In 2018, more than 40 players attended the practice sessions of the Chesterfield walking football team each week.

However, the first walking football game was played way before any of Chesterfield's senior team players were even born. Exactly 88 years ago, teams made up of old railroad workers from Derby and Crewe met at Derby City's football sanctuary, Baseball

Ground, which was closed in 1997. The tickets cost three pence for a standing place and six pence for a seat. A total of 1,500 curious pairs of eyes gathered at the venue to encourage these two teams, none of whose players were under the age of 65.

The local newspaper Derby Telegraph wrote of the match that ended in a 1-1 draw as follows:

“Bald heads, white moustaches and red faces were the order of the day, while one man played in spectacles. The combined age of the Derby team was 741 and of Crewe 733.”

The walking football matches between Derby and Crewe became an annual tradition until 1936, after which the walking football matches were forgotten for quite some time. The following mention about walking



football is from Chesterfield in 2011. Today, there are an estimated 1,200 walking football teams throughout the UK. To date, the largest event in the history of walking football was held in Scotland in June 2019, when more than 700 players took part in the Scottish Championship.

Therefore, it is no surprise that walking football arrived in Finland from Scotland. In Scotland, a new team of walking football players rose from amongst former drug users and mental health rehabilitators. The first walking football experiments of social psychiatric associations began in Finland in 2017, and in the spring of 2018, the Kuku-nori Walking Football project was launched. Finland's first walking football tournament, the Kuku-nori Cup, was played in August 2018 at Brahenkenttä in Helsinki.

Currently, in 2021, there are approximately 35 walking football teams in Finland and about 70 actors in the NGO sector are involved in the sport.

WALKING FOOTBALL PROJECT IN BRIEF.

Kukunori ry's three-year Walking Football project (2018–2020) is a project funded by

STEA, the purpose of which is to create good conditions for social exercise for substance abuse and mental health rehabilitators. The project assists the social and health care sector with starting and integrating walking football activities into the other activities of the organisation.

This guidebook was created by Rauni Koikalainen, Aapo Kotkavuori and Matias Sako, employees of the Walking Football project, in cooperation with organisations and sports enthusiasts. The guidebook has been compiled based on questions and experiences that have arisen during the project. This guidebook is written for professionals working in the social and health care sector with substance abusers and mental health rehabilitators, and who are considering incorporating social exercise as part of the rehabilitation work. The guidebook goes through the various stages of organising a walking football activity, from identifying the possible players down to establishing and financing the operations.



1. Preparation

Launching a walking football team is easy and simple. Not much is needed for it: only the players, the ball and a suitable location are necessary! This chapter provides instructions on what to consider before getting started.

Team activities and the practice

INVITING AND MAPPING THE PLAYERS TO JOIN. The very first step of starting a walking football team is identifying the potential players. The threshold for starting a novelty sport can be high at first and assembling an entire training team from merely one single organisation's customers can be tricky. Therefore, cooperation with other actors in the same neighbourhood, for example, is recommended. Adequate information distribution within your own

organisation is emphasised, especially in the early stages.

The best way to invite players to join the team is to arrange a short information session. At the event, the main points and the rules of the sport can be presented, but the information session also allows everyone to meet the people that might join the team in person, as well as the possible team members meeting the organisers. During the information session, it is also easy to address and answer all sorts of questions that may arise. Before the event, you should also decide the time and place of the first trial session of the sport. Thus, those interested can be offered an immediate opportunity to get to know more of the sport. Social media advertising is also recommended if the team needs more players.

You can find walking football-related videos and pictures on our website and going through them with other players can help ease any stress one might be experiencing when trying new things. However, trying out the sport yourself in real life is always

the best way of getting to know a new concept – not talking, or lecturing about it or watching videos.

TIME AND PLACE OF THE PRACTICE. Walking football can practically be played on any flat surface where the boundaries of the field are clearly marked. If the players' commitment to the hobby is questionable during the launch phase, it may be justified to arrange the first training sessions at a nearby park, for instance, without having to book and/or pay for a specific field or reserved time. However, as the activities stabilise, it is desirable to reserve a recurring weekly shift to make it a routine.

In Helsinki, Oulu, and Vantaa, among others, the sports committees and units of the cities have started supporting the walking football activities of social and health care organisations by offering free field shifts to

the teams. You can contact your local sports office and inquire about opportunities for cooperation.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT THE PRACTICE. Once the time and place of the football practice has been confirmed, information on the practice will follow. It is a good idea to agree on a common information distribution channel when forming a team. WhatsApp groups or SMS circles are a good way of making sure all players are up to date on the times and places of the practices. It is a good idea for each organisation involved in the operations to choose one person amongst them that takes care of the information distribution for the people in their own organisation. Also, third-party services on the Internet, such as Nimenhuuto.com, are convenient and simple ways of keeping track of when you practice and who is going to participate.



What is needed for starting walking football?

*Where can you play?
Is booking a shift
required?*

PLACE. A walking football field can be any place where it is safe to play and where the boundaries of the field can be clearly marked. The most recommended playing platforms are grass and artificial turf fields, but also sand fields and indoor school gyms are suitable. It is important to note that the field is rectangular in shape. The recommended field is 25 to 50 metres long and 16 to 35 metres wide.

When launching the walking football activity, it is not yet necessary to book your own practice shift. You can arrange a trial session for the sport even at a public park, where, for example, the park benches or cones can be used to form the goals et al. When the activity becomes established, it is worth asking the municipal sports service team if it would be possible to get your own regular practice shift.

*How many players are needed?
Where can the players be found?
How do I find myself a team?*

PLAYERS AND PARTICIPANTS. If an actual practice match is the aim of the practice session, it would be preferable to have at

least six players present. In this case, it is possible to play in three-on-three teams so that the teams play without a goalkeeper. When playing without goalkeepers, it is recommended to downsize the goals to a small enough size that defending the goal without a goalkeeper is feasible.

There is no maximum limit on the number of players. In walking football games, there may well be 10 to 20 players on the field, depending on the size of the field. If the field starts to get too cramped, it is recommended to split the group either into two separate games or introduce substitute players. For example, if there are 20 players present in the practice, it is possible to play so that both teams have six players and a goalkeeper on the field at the same time. In this case, both teams will have three players on the bench.

Using substitute players often makes sense because it offers a chance to take a breath and drink water. However, when using substitutes, it is important to ensure that the playing time is distributed as evenly as possible among all those involved in the training.

*What kind of ball is required?
What kind of goals are
suitable for walking football?*

THE BALL AND THE GOALS. When playing outdoors, it is recommended to use a size 5 ball, but any ball that does not pose a risk of injury to players is suitable for play. A futsal ball is suitable for indoor use. The ball must be intact and sufficiently firm. If possible, it is a good idea to have several balls with you for the different exercises and warm-ups.

It is recommended to use junior football goals or handball goals in walking football. When the goals are smaller, playing as a goalkeeper becomes easier and the game becomes smoother. If there are no junior or handball goals available, the goals can be marked with cones or, for example, backpacks. Lack of goals is not a huge obstacle, and it certainly does not prevent playing!

Does the goalkeeper need gloves? Do I need to buy shin guards or football boots?

OTHER EQUIPMENT. There are no restrictions on the players' equipment other than that one must take into consideration that the clothing and other equipment used does not endanger themselves or other players. Any clothing that feels adequate for exercising and playing walking football is good for the sport.

Football boots, shin guards and goalkeeper gloves can be worn, but they are not com-

pulsory. However, the use of shin guards is highly recommended. In walking football, the impacts directed at the legs and feet are relatively gentle and less frequent due to the slower pace of the game, but it is worth keeping in mind that it is very possible to hit your feet or legs together even when walking.

If possible, the team should get two sets of team bibs for the whole team. The bibs make it easier to divide and tell the difference between the teams in the practice and make the game smoother. If the team cannot acquire bibs, it can be agreed that each player will take a light and a dark shirt to the practice, allowing the teams to be divided based on the colour of the shirts.

Each participant brings their own water bottle. If there is no water station in the location of the practice, it should be mentioned separately.

Although there is a very low risk of injury in walking football, it is advisable to carry a first aid kit with bandages with you (wound dressings, patches, skin tape), disinfectant and ice bags.





2. Instructions

Taking part, practicing and being together are the main points of the hobby. In this chapter, you will find the most important things to consider when planning your football practice. However, the issues discussed below are merely suggestions. There is no right or wrong in a walking football practice, but rather each practice team or organisation is allowed and encouraged to develop an activity and training culture that best suits them. The most important thing in the practice is the joy of playing and having fun!

In the beginning of the practice session

The coach or instructor plans the practice ahead of time. When the content of the practice is thought out in advance, it is pleasant and straightforward for everyone to take part. Above all, advance planning

eases the instructor's own workload. The content of the whole practice can, at its simplest, consist of 1) the warm-up, 2) playing and/or practice match and 3) cooling down. It is enough if the coach has a relatively broad idea of what the team is going to do in the warm-up, how to guide the play this time, and how to execute the cool-down session. The same plan outline can easily be applied with slight alterations from week to week. From time to time, however, it is a fabulous idea to ask the team members if they are happy with the structure and content of the practice and how they would like to improve it.

HOW TO BEGIN THE SESSION. Before the first training session, it is smart to set aside enough time to thoroughly go through the rules and determine the common values of the team. The values can be, for instance, always encouraging the other team members and taking others into account and respecting them. For some players, walking football may be their first hobby activity in a long time, which can be stressful. Therefore, the first meeting could be arranged,

for instance, near the organisation's facilities, and after gathering there, moving together to the location of the practice. This is recommended especially before the first official meeting.

It is a good idea for the instructor to make sure that the equipment needed for the game is in good condition (e.g., the balls have enough air in them, and the bibs have been washed). This task can also be done by another member of the team. In addition, it is a good idea for the instructor, preferably in collaboration with the participants, to prepare the field before the start of the practice (putting the goals in place and marking the field boundaries).

To begin with, it is advisable to review the main rules of walking football, especially if it is the first training session or if new players have joined the team. The common situations mentioned in this guidebook are sufficient for the rule revision.

WARMING UP. Warming up is an essential part of training. Warming up all your muscle groups significantly reduces the risk of injuries. Although walking football is a slower-paced sport than regular football, unexpected situations may occur while playing that can result in injury.

For example, walking, marching, back-kicking, lunges, and squats are suitable ways of warming up for a walking football session. It is also highly recommended to incorporate the ball in the warm-up. A good warm-up that incorporates the ball can be, for instance, walking and passing the ball around in small groups. In addition, a traditional game of dodgeball also functions as a good warm-up. Dodgeball can easily be altered to be more like football by adjusting the rules so that the players are only allowed to kick the ball instead of throwing it. The most

important components of the warm-up are not the individual exercises but simply making sure that the whole body is being moved and warmed up in a way that is suitable for everyone.

It can also be agreed amongst the team that the players themselves take turns in planning the warm-up. This provides variety to the sessions, and everyone gets a chance to participate, if they wish, by other means than just by playing. Ideas for the warm-up exercises can be found on YouTube, for example, by typing football / soccer warm up in the search box. However, it must be kept in mind that there may also be players on the team who do not wish to participate in the planning of the warm-up. The practice session and all team activities must be kept a safe and comfortable place for all their participants. The team must give everyone space to fully be themselves. The participants are offered opportunities to take responsibility, but on the other hand, all the needed space is given to those who so desire.

EXERCISES. Performance-focused, technical training does not play a central role in walking football. No previous background or sports-related skills are required of the instructor or the players. However, if your team has players with no previous experience in football or walking football, it is a good idea to use a small portion of the practice to learn the basic skills of football: passing and taking possession of the ball, dribbling, and shooting the ball. A moderate understanding of ball handling and basic walking football skills greatly facilitates playing and increases participants' enjoyment of the game. Basic skills can be taught by anyone, and there are plenty of sources and people teaching these skills on YouTube. The YouTube channel of walking football is also an advisable source.

How to play

RULES. You can find the rulebook of walking football at www.kävelyfutis.fi. You can also order a printed version of the guide by contacting the walking football project staff. Contact information can be found on our website.

The rules of walking football are largely based on the rules of traditional football,

but there are some differences. The most essential features of walking football are the lack of running, physical contact and heading the ball. The purpose of these rules is to allow everyone to play by lowering the starting threshold and making gaming as safe as possible for everyone. Below are the main differences from the rules of regular football.

THESE RULES WILL GET YOU STARTED

- **Running is prohibited.** In walking football, the only allowed form of moving forward is walking. The definition of a walk is that one foot must always maintain contact with the field surface. If a player takes a running step, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team. If this infraction is repeated a third time, a penalty kick will be awarded to the opposing team.
- **All impact directed at the feet and legs is prohibited.** If a player strikes their opponent's feet/legs when trying to get the ball or otherwise, an indirect free kick is awarded to that opponent.
- **Heading the ball is not permitted.** If a player heads the ball, the opposing team is awarded an indirect free kick from the place where the heading took place.
- **The ball must always remain below the top of the goal.** If the ball is intentionally kicked higher than the crossbar, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team from the spot where the kick originated. If the ball accidentally bounces higher than the crossbar, for example, because of the goalkeeper's defence, the game will continue as before.
- **The infraction known as off-sides is not included in walking football.**
- **A kick-in (sideline kick) is used instead of a throw-in.** When the ball crosses the side of the field of play, the game continues with a kick-in.
- **Rolling substitutions are permitted.**
- **Only the goalkeeper is allowed to play within the penalty area.** In walking football, the goalkeeper has been assigned his own semi-circular goalie area. The goalkeeper is not allowed to play outside of this area, and field players are not allowed to play inside the goalie area. If the goalkeeper comes out of his/her area or a player of his own team goes into the goalkeeper's area, the game is continued with an indirect free kick from the opposing team. If an opponent goes into the goalie area, the game is continued with an indirect free kick by the goalkeeper from anywhere inside the goalie area.

CUSTOMARY TEAMS AND METHODS OF PLAYING. Most commonly, there are two opposing teams in the game, each with 5 field players and 1 goalkeeper. 4 + 1 and 6 + 1 are also quite common forms of play used in official events.

If there are fewer players, playing without goalkeepers is recommended. In this case, it is advisable to use goals that are as small as possible or to make small goals from cones so that scoring a goal is not all too easy. If there are a lot of players, you may want to use substitutes or split the team into two separate games.



GAME VARIATIONS

In addition to the usual free game, you can sometimes use game variations that will develop the team strategically and/or socially. The following are a few additional rules that can be used to develop the team to play better together and help ensure that each team's players have equal access to the game.

- **A three-touch game**

A player can use a total of three touches at one time, during which a pass or a kick must be performed. If a player touches the ball more than three times without passing the ball to another player, the offense will result in an indirect free kick for the opposing team. The purpose of this form of play is to ensure that all players have similar access to the game and that individual players cannot control the game despite their possible technical superiority.

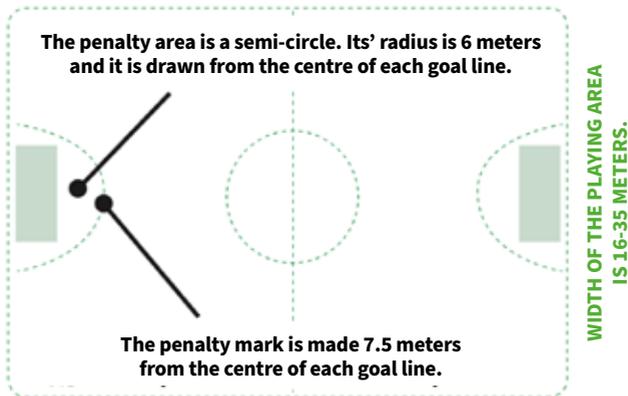
- **The ball must be passed to each player before a goal can be scored**

The ball must be passed at least once to each player on the team before attempting to score. This manner of playing is the most ideal when there are few people on the field.

- **Scoring directly from passing the ball**

A goal only counts if it is scored with the first touch. The ball must be kicked into the goal directly from a teammate's pass. If a player takes possession of or touches the ball before a goal attempt, he cannot score until the ball has been in the possession of one of the other players on the team.

LENGTH OF THE PLAYING AREA IS 25-50 METERS.



OTHER ESSENTIAL MATTERS TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION. It is recommended that one player is on the field for a maximum of 15 minutes at a time. After this, it is good to take a short break for rehydrating and resting. This way, no one gets too exhausted, and the risk of injury remains low. It is a good idea to take at least three short water breaks for every hour of exercise.

When playing a practice match, it is important to try and keep the game progressing as smoothly as possible while keeping in mind the rules and the safety of the players. When playing a practice match, it is also important that the teams are as evenly skilled as possible. If it looks like during the game that one team is much more formidable than the other, it is recommended to have a couple of players switch to the other team to even out the teams. This makes the game more meaningful for everyone.

It is strongly recommended that the coach announces during the game why, for example, a free kick was awarded. Putting the gameplay into clear words helps everyone understand the game better.

In walking football practice, it is essential that everyone treats their fellow players in

a respectful manner. Each team member is an important part of facilitating a great hobby for one another. It is important to respect others and be polite. This ought to be discussed with the team. If necessary, the topic can also be taken up regularly during training. The most important thing, however, is setting a good example! All members of the team are always encouraged after both successful and unsuccessful game performances! One of the most important jobs of the coach is to encourage and praise each team member regardless of whether their performance has been successful.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK. The coach or instructor inspires with his or her example and helps to create the right kind of routine and spirit for the team. The coach encourages and inspires the players and does not blame the referee or opponents for any result. Positive feedback on successful performances is a must ("Go Pekka! Great pass!"), And for a failed performance that was a good attempt, however, one can always give positive feedback ("Nice try! Try again!"). After a failed performance, you can also show support and encouragement ("That (miss) means nothing! You'll score any moment now!"). At the end of the practice or a match, the coach can also give the

general final feedback in a positive manner (“Wow, that was a great session! It was so much fun playing with you guys again! See you next week!”). Abundant positive feedback helps to build positive team spirit, which is the foundation of a good walking football team.

At the end of the practice session

COOLING DOWN. The cooling down part of the practice should most preferably be something that incorporates the ball and is also easy to put into practice. For instance, walking with the ball and light passing of the ball are suitable. Collecting the equipment, such as possible cones, balls, and bibs can be made a part of the cooling down process. Cleaning up after you are together also increases shared responsibility for practice sessions. The most important thing in cooling down is not that the movements are executed technically correctly. On the contrary, the most important thing is to remember to move the body lightly for at least 5-10 minutes after exercising, moving both the upper and lower body. The manner of doing this is unrestricted. In this way, recovery from exercise is accelerated and injuries are prevented. You can find ideas for cooling down on the YouTube channel of Kävelyfutis or other YouTube channels focused on football and walking football.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT FUTURE PRACTICE SESSIONS. A common information channel should be created for the team where the time and place of any future practice sessions can be found. Also, at the end of the practice, the time of the next training session should be shared while the whole team is still present.

DISCUSSION AND THANKS. At the end of a practice, the players and the coach have a

good opportunity to discuss the events of the game and chat about anything that is going on in their lives that they may want to share. Being together and socialising at the end of a practice is a key part of how the team functions.

When it is time to say goodbye after the practice, it is polite to thank the coach and all the teammates for the session. It is crucial that everyone goes home from the practice in good spirits.

For instance, you may think during the game that one of your teammates made an unwise tactical decision, you yourself failed in your performance, or someone was playing very selfishly and keeping the ball to themselves. Occurrences like these can cause frustration during a game, but once the practice or a game finishes, it is important to remember that each member of the team is a crucial part of keeping the team and the whole concept of walking football afloat in your organisation. Without all the participants, there would be no team and no activity to join. Sharing how grateful you are and saying thank you is a great way of showing your appreciation to your teammates and coach.

OFF-FIELD ACTIVITIES. At its best, walking football is much more than an on-field activity. It is highly recommended that players go and have a cup of coffee or lunch together after practice, or even go to a park and socialise. After practice, it is sometimes nice to discuss the events of the practice, get to know the team members, and deepen friendships, which can ultimately be the most valuable gift that the hobby can give. At least once a year, it is also worth organising a season-closing party for the team, where people gather to look back at the past year and spend time together.

3. Establishment of operations

As the walking football practice sessions start rolling from week to week and a core group of people has been gathering around the hobby for a while, it is worth thinking about how to institutionalise the activity. Walking football can, in the long run, include costs, which in turn raises the threshold for continuing the hobby at both the organisational and the individual level.

FUNDING. If your organisation cannot afford to pay for the training shift, you should contact the municipality's sports division. The employees of the walking football project are also happy to help with initiating municipal cooperation. Organisations can also apply for funding to maintain the activity. Here are a few of the organisations currently listed that provide funding.

- **Tukilinja** (www.tukilinja.fi). This line of support gives grants to, among other matters, leisure activities of mental health rehabilitation. The grants can be applied for by private people as well as communities. The grants for private people can be applied for throughout the year and are awarded monthly. Grants for private people are max. 5,000 euros. Grants to communities may be higher than this.

- **Football Association of Finland** (<https://www.palloliitto.fi/jalkapalloperhe/palloliitto/jalkapallo-saatio/avustukset>). In the grants awarded in 2019, the Board of the Football Association emphasised, among other things, projects that support football and sports culture. For example, in 2019, the VPS junior team received 1,500 euros in field fees for walking football for substance abuse and mental health rehabilitation patients. The VPS Juniors walking football

team works in cooperation with the Ostrobothnian Social Psychiatric Association.

- **Sponsors.** In addition to funding, the team can seek sponsors that are willing to contribute to the cost of, for example, the uniforms and the equipment. The sponsor can be, for instance, a local company in the area. Prospective sponsors can be approached by phone or e-mail. Companies today are more and more eager to make a social impact and sponsoring a local walking football team is a wonderful and effortless way for a company to get involved in the social development of the area. A company can also deduct sponsorship expenses in its taxation. It is worth familiarising yourself with the price estimates for the uniforms/bibs and equipment purchases in advance so that concrete figures can be presented when approaching a potential sponsor.

COOPERATION BETWEEN ORGANISATIONS.

The game is smoother, easier, and more meaningful when the participant base is as stable and broad as possible. Therefore, cooperation between different organisations is essential from the very beginning but will be further emphasised as operations become more established. If possible, it would be beneficial if the municipality's sports division were asked to participate in the activities from the beginning. Municipalities can often offer fields for special sports free of charge or at a very reasonable price.

It is easier to get a sufficient number of players to a practice when more than one organisation is involved. It is a very rare case if there are too many players present at a practice. The large number of players is only a positive thing for walking football

activities. Instead, too few players eat up the motivation of those involved and can, at worst, lead to discontinuing the hobby. Therefore, the number one goal is to make sure there are enough players in the practice sessions!

The City of Oulu acts as a good example. In Oulu, walking football was launched within

the years 2018 and 2019 as a collaboration of several organisations. The participatory organisations were the City of Oulu, Klubi-talo Pönnkä, Hyvän Mielen Talo ry and the Oulu A-kilta. In the first walking football practice, there were over 30 new players interested in the sport.





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