

*News Brief*

January 2022



## *This Is a Big Year for GSSM ... IT'S OUR 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY!*

I still cannot believe we are coming up on our 10 year anniversary. And what an amazing 10 years it has been! God has truly been with us from the start and directed every single step. Upon starting GSSM, my parents and I had to take a big leap of faith. Once we resigned our positions at Sports Outreach we started completely over and acted in obedience to the strong calling on all of our lives and that was to train committed believers in the use of sports as a means to share the Gospel around the world. It hasn't been an easy road but it has been the most rewarding and fulfilling. I heard a quote once that has always stuck with me and is a good reminder for all of us..."God calls us to be uncomfortable". All God wants is for us to be willing to be His hands and feet and GO! God can do the extraordinary things through ordinary people if we are only bold enough to answer the call. I challenge each of you in honor of our 10th anniversary to ask the Lord how he wants you to reach the lost around you.

And be bold and undaunted by His call...the reward is great and the harvest fields are plentiful!

To kick off our 10th anniversary celebration, we thought it would be really special to share in Russ' own words the story of how GSSM came into existence and why at 79 years old my amazing dad started completely over to fulfill and stay faithful to the calling God placed on his heart. I am thankful that God gave me the same calling and that I have the honor of carrying on the ministry that my parents so faithfully began! Here is to the next 10 years! God is already doing amazing things through our students and 1000s are coming to Christ ... can you imagine what 10 more years of training new sports ministers will look like?! I cannot wait! My GOAL in the next 10 years is to have a sports minister in every country around the world! So pray alongside us as we continue to answer his call to GO & MAKE disciples of all nations! Thank you for the many years of standing with us, praying for us and faithfully and generously supporting our staff and students! We honestly would not have made it to this milestone without you as part of our GSSM team.

*In HIM,* *Alma Cauce Mahone*

**GSSM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

# *An excerpt from The Coach Who Lost It All In Order To Win It All*

*by Russ Carr*

## **Chapter 17**

**Little did Russ Carr know that God was not through with him just yet.**

After spending nearly thirty years with Sports Outreach Institute, including his time as Executive Director of Adventure in Education, Russ assumed his remaining years would continue under the SOI umbrella.

As Russ turned over the leadership of SOI, the organization he had founded and led for many years, a change of direction for Sports Outreach was in the wind. Although the ministry remained strongly evangelical, the organization was about to embrace a more humanitarian philosophy with less emphasis on the training and development of sports ministry leaders.

**And be bold and undaunted by His call ... the reward is great and the harvest fields are plentiful!**

Following a brief attempt by Russ to partially restore the training emphasis by establishing a school of sports ministry within SOI, it became apparent that the new leadership felt that allowing the school to function under SOI could cause confusion and division within the organization. The new chairman of the board of directors explained the situation in this way: *"With an initial concentration on evangelism and training through soccer programs, Sports Outreach has grown into an organization with a focused mission to minister to and serve the poorest of the poor.*

*In addition to sports ministry and training, the mission includes feeding programs, Bible teaching and public health programs.*

*Over time, founder Russ Carr felt God's call to launch a global school of sports ministry. Since this ambitious venture contemplated a truly global reach and a particular focus on sports ministry training, the board of SOI encouraged Russ to follow his call through a separate organization, thus giving him the freedom to develop a distinctive training endeavor as he saw fit without diluting the mission and resources of SOI."*

*Cliff Lundberg*

*Chairman of the Board  
Sports Outreach Institute*

*April 16, 2012*

As a consequence of this new philosophy within the SOI Administration, Russ concluded that if he was to be obedient to the Lord's calling it would be necessary to leave SOI and start over.

Start over? Russ was closing in on age 79 at this time and some thought him out of his mind to consider such an idea. "Back off, relax, retire, enjoy what life you have left," some suggested. "You have done enough...why in the world would you even consider establishing a new organization? Don't you know when it is time to quit?"



While Russ reflected on this well-meaning advice, he continued to pray and seek the Lord's direction. He thought about Moses who was 80 years old when the Lord asked him to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. His brother, Aaron was 83. In spite of their ages, Moses and Aaron were obedient and did exactly that which God asked them to do.

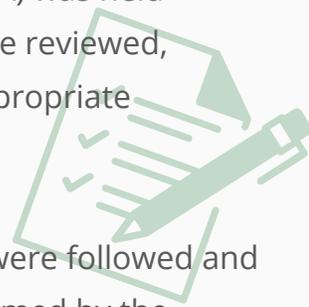
Keenly aware that he was clearly not a Moses or Aaron, Russ also knew that God didn't need him and could raise up anyone of His choosing. Not wishing to miss God's blessing, Russ chose once again to follow what the Lord had laid on his heart. With the support of his wife and family, he announced that he would leave SOI and start over with a new program that would train and equip dedicated believers to go out into the harvest fields and declare the Good News to a very needy world. Thus, Global School of Sports Ministry (GSSM) was born.

**The school would offer an 18 month online course of study that would culminate with each student initiating a sports ministry program of their own through their local church. Furthermore, the student would be asked to sign a letter of intent that stated they would maintain the program for at least 3 or more years. Russ wanted to train only those who were serious about their faith and who had an overwhelming desire to reach the lost.**

Starting over would not be easy. Much prayer would have to precede the formation of the new organization. A board of directors composed of Godly men needed to be established. Volunteer instructors would have to be identified and trained.

Revision of the existing textbook written by Russ would be necessary. Online lessons would have to be created as well as practicums designed for each student to allow for 'hands on experience' that would enhance their learning and understanding. Clearly, there was much to be done.

Prior to raising necessary funds for Global, a non-profit status needed to be obtained from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Therefore a Christian attorney was hired, numerous forms filled out and an additional meeting with a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) was held complete with more forms to be reviewed, approved and filed with the appropriate government agencies.



Once all of the required steps were followed and the papers filed, Russ was informed by the attorney that it normally takes 60-90 days to complete the process and gain approval from the IRS. "No problem," the attorney stated.

**Little did the attorney realize that a scandal was brewing within the IRS and the application of GSSM would fall into the hands of an office where some officials had been instructed to delay or even reject those applications from conservative and evangelical groups.**

With the official starting date for GSSM fast approaching, Russ became concerned about prospective donors expecting tax-deductible receipts. The attorney helping GSSM advised Russ that it would be okay to issue tax-deductible receipts since once the IRS approved the application, the official date of operation reverts back to the date on the application.

## **Nevertheless, Russ was still concerned.**

He did not want to mislead any donors. More prayer. When checking the validity of the attorney's statement regarding the issue, an agency overseeing such matters confirmed the legal advice that the attorney had provided. Still Russ felt uneasy and pondered how he would refund the funds that had already begun to arrive.

The weeks turned into months and still no word from the IRS. Russ was advised to contact his congressman to see if he could help. Nearly 10 months had passed since filing GSSM's application. So much for the 60-90 day processing period.

The congressman's office was very helpful and the woman assigned to the case was excellent. However, the congressman's letters and direct contacts with the IRS only seemed to provoke the IRS representatives. Questionnaires and more forms were sent from the government. No sooner had one form been filled out and returned when another arrived.

**At this point the media had begun reporting that the IRS was going to be sued for allegedly targeting conservative and evangelical Christian groups. One day before the IRS scandal blew wide open, Global School of Sports Ministry received their letter of approval after waiting nearly a full year for this important document.**

Russ and the GSSM staff managed a collective sigh of relief and then proceeded to praise God for this significant answer to prayer...just in the 'nick of time'.

Raising funds for any organization is always a challenge. After establishing a reasonable base for SOI over the years, the thought of having to start over and build a new foundation of financial assistance bordered on discouragement.

**When Russ left Sports Outreach Institute he was informed by SOI's administration that he could not use any of the names on the mailing list of Sports Outreach Institute to raise funds for Global School of Sports Ministry. Russ understood SOI leadership's concerns but responded he would use the names of individuals that he personally brought to SOI when he founded Sports Outreach. Russ' list consisted of 150 names that included family, friends and others he had known over the years and used as a base to start SOI.**

One of the most difficult steps of faith for many people comes when finances are involved. Russ found it particularly hard as he was fiercely independent, very frugal with any funds entrusted to him and quite concerned about protecting his integrity. Letting go was not easy. Russ realized that God must be given complete rein in our lives if He is to truly use us. Therefore everything must be released to him including our finances. If money becomes our security it is more than likely that we will fail the test of trusting the Lord completely and probably not make it into the starting lineup.



Russ subscribed to the philosophy that God owns it all. What we have personally is on loan to us from the Lord. In Russ' mind we are to prayerfully use whatever resources the Lord places in our hands and to use these resources in such a way as to bring honor and glory to God.

When needs arise we are to go to Him in prayer seeking His help and wisdom. Prayer is always step one in our walk of faith. Therefore, Russ and Sue, once again went to their knees seeking much needed help from the Lord as they launched the new ministry to which they had been called. Blessing number one bubbled to the surface when Sports Outreach Institute agreed to Russ' request that SOI transfer funds to GSSM that were designated to SOI's School of Sports Ministry. In addition, SOI further agreed to transfer most of the funds given to Russ for his oversight concerning some projects for which he was still responsible.

In a short time, Russ and Barnabas prayerfully worked out a game plan for GSSM. Using the strategy outlined by Christ to His disciples just before He ascended into Heaven to be with His Father, Jesus stated, "And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:18) NIV



Russ and Barnabas would start in their Jerusalem (Uganda) and then gradually reach into Judea (neighboring countries) then into Samaria (other African countries) and finally into the rest of the world as God would lead, direct and provide for them.

As Global's initial term was about to begin and the experimental program run under SOI was concluding, Russ, Barnabas and board member Roland Jacks traveled throughout Uganda administering oral and written final exams to those completing the course work under SOI. They also interviewed a number of prospective students and met with pastors and other leaders who expressed a great interest in the training program.

In spite of being slightly behind the projected start time for the online course, GSSM registered 76 students in Uganda with inquiries from 43 others representing Kenya, Liberia and the U.S. However, the students outside of Uganda failed to register on time and were put on a waiting list for the next term.

What was truly amazing to Russ and his colleagues was the fact that GSSM's website was not yet operational and 'somehow' the word spread and requests came in from different parts of the globe. Once again it was evident that God was at work.

But now what? Seventy-six students were anxiously awaiting their first lesson and the official start date for the training program was just a few weeks away. Russ had to hustle to find some volunteer teachers to assist him. More prayer.

**First on board from outside the staff was Dr. Rolland Jacks, former teacher, principal and professor of education at Westmont College. Dr. Jacks was one of seven board members on GSSM's Board of Directors.**

**Also responding were Larry and Sandie Leatherman, both teachers and coaches who had just retired from their position in Truckee, California. Larry was a former player and one of the captains on Russ' Westmont soccer team. Larry spent his professional career as a teacher, coach and pastor.**

**Dr. Bill Gribbin from Liberty University also joined the faculty as did Steve Clark who had recently retired as a teacher in a Northern California school district. In addition, Lynn Berntson from Oregon came aboard to round out GSSM's initial faculty that also included staff members Barnabas Mwesiga, Alyssa Carr Mahone and Russ Carr. Armed with only a few simple instructions, a textbook and faculty handbook, these GSSM pioneers did an outstanding job overseeing Global's initial class.**

Following the first 3 months of introductory material, the lessons turned very pragmatic as each student began planning a major sports ministry program of their own working alongside their local church.

Practicums were also being introduced as Barnabas began organizing several programs of outreach that would allow GSSM students to get their 'hands dirty' under the watchful eye of Mwesiga. This important addition has proved to be a significant element in GSSM's curriculum enabling staff to better assist and evaluate their students.

The practicums were generally scheduled around key holidays like Christmas, Easter and summer

breaks that would often coincide with key events such as the Olympics, soccer's World Cup or other notable sporting events.

During these practicums students would be involved in a wide range of activities such as community service, organizing and conducting tournaments, putting on clinics for different sports and forming leagues. The students would share the Gospel, give their testimonies at appropriate times, visit the sick and needy, minister in prisons, work with the disabled, elderly and the traumatized, initiate discipleship programs for new believers that, in most cases, would involve the local church.

While participating in the practicums, the students were able to ask questions, work out different challenges that would pop up like a jack-in-the-box and be encouraged by GSSM staff to use creative ideas to reach even more people for Christ.

Three months into GSSM's training curriculum, students are required to start a sports ministry program of their own through their local church. As the students initiated their own programs many would face a number of challenges including the ever-present need for resources. Therefore, part of GSSM's training involves addressing the issue of sustainability. From the very beginning each student is informed that they must find their own support for their program.

When each 18-month training period is concluded, GSSM representatives visit every student, administer oral and written final



examinations and evaluate the sports ministry program initiated by the student.

Students who successfully complete all of the graduation requirements are awarded a diploma which is generally presented during a service at their local church. In addition the student is given a sports ministry kit or other helpful gift. The sports ministry kit includes such useful items as a Study Bible, discipleship materials, Gospels of John, New Testaments, Bibles, Gospel tracts, a soccer ball (or volleyball, basketball or other equipment depending on the sport of choice in his or her region). Upon completing this course a successful sports ministry is the result although never easy our faithful students never give up!



As we shared above, **this year GSSM is celebrating 10 years of ministry.** In the fall of 2021, our team took some time to plan for and pray about what is to come for GSSM, and we're so excited to grow and improve so that we can serve more students, empowering and educating them as they prepare to start their sports ministry journeys. Be on the lookout for some exciting things this year!

What's coming in 2022?

- An update on the 2021 Christmas Outreach!
- Some exciting updates from GSSM Staff abroad and their amazing ministries
- News from GSSM Alumni all over the world
- And MORE

We're really looking forward to an impactful and fruitful year and we're thankful that God has provided a community around us that has been supportive, prayerful, and encouraging for almost a decade!

## Let's Connect!



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**Blessings to you and your family,**  
*The GSSM Team*

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