

DEJAN RADU

AGE: 20

HOMETOWN: Pancevo

COUNTRY: Serbia

POSITION: Midfield



STORY: Dejan is a 20-year-old footballer from Serbia who has overcome tremendous circumstances to be where he is today. Dejan has no parents and spent most of his young life growing up in an institution in the city of Pancevo, Serbia, alongside 100 other children. The only close relatives Dejan has ever had are his grandparents, who were too elderly to care for him, so he had to learn to take care of himself.

He managed to enter school, complete his studies and now holds a job with a company that makes gardening equipment. He lives in a rented flat that he shares with four other friends he met in the group home where he grew up—all of this thanks to his dedication, commitment to hard work and the assistance of a state project that works to assist those with intellectual disabilities develop their independence.

When he was in school Dejan sought out football and always enjoyed it. He has since developed his football skills playing midfield on two Special Olympics teams over the past five years. He also participates with table tennis and swimming. Dejan plays on the Special Olympics Serbia unified football team, so he is aptly prepared to play in a unified match in South Africa.

In addition to his challenges growing up, Dejan also recently endured a leg injury, which kept him from traveling with his Special Olympics team to a Special Olympics European football tournament. However, he did not let the setback keep him from recovering, and has since come back stronger than ever on the field. His football dream is to play for a big, popular football club someday, such as his favorites Manchester United and Barcelona. His coach has known him since he was a child in school and is proud to see the man that Dejan has become. His coaches and friends are very excited that Dejan will be getting the opportunity to play in the Unity Cup because they all feel he deserves it more than anyone else.

Special Olympics has changed Dejan's life because it has given him opportunities that he never thought possible. At the most fundamental he has been able to train, compete and play the sports he loves, but through Special Olympics he has also received medical care, traveled outside of his home city and beyond anything else, has gained the courage to believe in himself as a person.