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Understanding the longitudinal impact of the Homeless World Cup on the lives of its participants.

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Forecasts have predicted that global homelessness will continue to rise in the coming years (Bramley, 2017). Despite access to housing being considered as a basic human need, it is estimated that there are 100 million people experiencing homelessness, and 1.6 billion people without adequate shelter (United Nations, 2005). Worryingly, even well-established countries in the Western World are not immune to homelessness (Revenhill, 2008). Due to widespread concern, a number of "Sport for Development and Peace" (SDP) programs are working to ease the difficulties associated with homelessness, with a focus on development and reintegration into society. One such program is the Homeless World Cup (HWC), an annual soccer event which seeks to inspire homeless people, with more than 450 players representing 42 countries at the event in Mexico City in 2018. Despite the appeal of this hypothesis, scant research has explored the impact of the event on the lives of the individuals that participate, particularly how the event impacts participants' overtime. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore and understand the longitudinal impact of the HWC on players (n = 15) from two countries through in-depth semi-structured interviews over three time points (post-selection, returning from the event, long-term after the event), with supplementary semi-structured interviews with significant others (i.e. family members, friends). Findings unveiled the participants' varying routes into homelessness, with stories of trauma, abuse, and rehabilitation, while outlining the multi-faceted impact of the HWC and related SDP programming on their lives.