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**Higher Goals**

Christian Soccer Stars Unite to Talk Faith

By Paul Asay

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**What Happened:**

As a teen, Oscar Ewolo was already one of Congo's best soccer players. He was a force to be reckoned with on the field—and he parlayed his sports abilities into a wild life away from the sport. He was a notorious drinker and carouser, out nearly every night.

During Oscar's teen years, his mother became a Christian. "I had no idea what had happened in her life, but she was just different," Oscar says. "When I came home late at night from a night club, the light would be on in her room: She was praying." She inspired him—though initially, the soccer star was reluctant to follow her example. Then on the last day of 1998, when he was 20, Oscar decided to go to church.

"On the way, I met a group of friends on their way to a club," Oscar recalls. "I really wanted to go with them; but I had decided to go to church, and I stuck to my resolve. That night at church, I was really struck by the way the people loved each other. They loved life! The sermon also spoke to me. [The preacher] said God had a plan for all of us and wanted to give us the means of achieving it."

The next day, Oscar vowed to give up "women, clubs, everything that I was chasing to give me a little extra in life. I had found something better—love all around me." He's now captain of Congo's national team and plays professionally in France.

Oscar is one of several players who shares his faith on the new DVD *The Prize: Chasing the Dream* from Athletes in Action. Players featured include Lucio, captain of the Brazilian national team and member of the 2002 World Cup championship squad; Kaka, another Brazilian star and 2007 world player of the year; Spaniard Marcos Senna and others. You can learn more about the DVD at [ThePrize.com](http://ThePrize.com).

"I'm not talking about a fairytale God," says Kaka. "I'm talking about a God who I experience, who has changed my life and who changes and transforms me every day in a very real way."

**Talk About It:**

Professional athletes such as Oscar deal with a great deal of temptation—maybe more than the rest of us. Do you think it would be tough to be a Christian and professional athlete? Would you have been able to give up your lifestyle as Oscar did?

On the DVD, Oscar and others talk about how God has changed their lives—helping them on and off the field. Do you feel God helping you every day? Can you feel His presence when you're playing a sport? When you're doing your homework? When you're with friends?

When it comes to sports, do you think God cares who wins or loses? Do you think He helps athletes play better sometimes?

**What the Bible Says:**

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom. 12:2-3).

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17).

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize” (1 Cor. 9:24).