

Like most young boys, football played a major role in the lives of the Basque boys back in 1937. There were already strong footballing links between the two countries.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athletic_Bilbao#History

The company www.philosophyfootball.com has recently launched “*Refugees are our Football Family*” supported by the Football Supporters Federation, Football Acton Network, Football against Racism in Europe, Football Beyond Borders, Kick it Out and When Saturday Comes.

Below is a picture of their T shirt and part of their article that many will find interesting. This is followed by a short article about **Emilio Aldecoa**, the Basque refugee referred to in the article, and another about two further Basque brothers, **Jose and Antonio Gallego**, refugees, who became professional footballers in England.

See: <http://www.sportingintelligence.com/2011/11/11/spanish-footballers-in-england-a-potted-history-111104/>

Refugees are our Football Family (9th September 2015)

The first Spanish player in the English league? A Basque refugee from the Spanish Civil War (our italics). Scorer of Blackpool’s fourth and match-winning goal in the ‘Matthews Cup Final’? A refugee from the racist South African regime. Sometimes pub quiz questions have a knack of revealing hidden histories to explain not only the past but the present too.



All profits from sales of the shirt will go to Doctors of the World providing the only clinic in the Calais Refugee Camp as well as clinics in other refugee camps across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Each shirt sold will fund a hygiene kit to help prevent the spread of disease in the overcrowded camps. Every ten shirts sold will pay for a doctor and two nurses to staff the clinic for a day. If you can pay the solidarity price we can double the money raised.

See: <https://www.philosophyfootball.com/footballers/refugees-our-football-family.html>

Emilio Aldecoa

The first Spaniard to play in the English league, for any club, Emilio Aldecoa was born in Bilbao in 1922 and arrived in England as a 14-year-old in 1937 as a refugee from the Spanish Civil War. He arrived as one of 4,000 Basque children fleeing General Franco’s fascism.

He was a schoolboy striker who attracted attention for a ‘Basque Boys XI’ in late 1937 – and went on to play wartime football for Wolves before playing a season of league football for Coventry as a winger before heading home to Spain. He was capped once for Spain and won two titles with Barcelona during a playing career that lasted until 1954.



In the early 1960s he had a spell as assistant manager at Birmingham, and he died in 1999.

Jose and Antonio Gallego

Jose and Tony Gallego were the second and third Spanish players in the Football League and were also refugees from the Spanish Civil War. Jose was the more successful footballer, an outside forward who played league football for Brentford, Colchester and Southampton. It's believed that he's still alive, age 88. He spent 30 years of his post-playing days working as a gas meter inspector in Cambridge. It's hard to imagine Torres following the same route. Tony had a briefer playing career, as a goalkeeper with Norwich.

See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/José_Gallego_\(footballer,_born_1923\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/José_Gallego_(footballer,_born_1923))