

SAFF U15

Let me start with my wholehearted congratulations to our U15 women's team for their excellent performance and a thumping victory and their consistently superb performance throughout the SAFF Women's U15 tournament. Our girls managed to beat India 1-0 in the final, remained unbeaten without conceding a single goal. They had beaten all the teams in the previous stage convincingly and left no doubt that our girls were the best team with the best players and worthiest contenders for the trophy.

I am delighted to pronounce with much certainty that our academies and residency training programmes are yielding rich dividends sooner than we had expected. These girls have been developed for over the last year. It was plain that their experience from consistent training, games programme, playing tougher and stronger opponents from the national women's teams prepared them well to face their contemporaries with full confidence. This holistic development for our elite female players will continue with vigour and foresight.

First Ever Instructors Course

This month saw the first ever BFF AFC Instructors Course with the aim of creating more qualified coaches around the country. I have repeated this often only because there is no alternative to educated and qualified coaches on our way to better footballing standards across the country. The first step towards that is to make sure that young expiring footballers are exposed to correct teaching, learning and proper practice.

The only way to multiply the number of qualified coaches is to have qualified coach instructors who will be able to develop more coaches. These coaches will be qualified to develop C certificate coaches.

The instructors' course had 22 participants with 18 male and 4 female coaches. Only those with a B or A License Certificate, coaching background and some teaching credentials were eligible to take part. The course included 35 hours of training in total during which the students learned about teaching strategies, learning, presentation skills, the C Certificate Course content, assessment processes, and importance of feedback and engaged in micro teaching sessions both in the classroom and on the field.

A more viable and varied coaching career will ensure higher retention of footballing talent in the game long after the players have retired from active football. This will hopefully make football look like a viable career option for many instead of just a few years as a club player.

National Referees' Exam

Bangladesh Football Federation held a test to promote Class I Referees to National Referees at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. BFF Referees Committee organised the exam with the committee deputy chair Ibrahim Nesar and Sujit Kumar Banerjee as physical instructors. This test included physical and written exam. A total of 75 referees from all over the country took part. This emphasized a fresh drive to continue to develop our referees.

School football from February

Bangladesh Football Federation is all set to roll out school football across the country from February,

2018. This is a fantastic opportunity to provide football opportunities to school age children. This initiative will involve 53 districts throughout Bangladesh. These teams will be split into eight zones. Then they will compete in a two group league phase in the first round with the eight zonal champions getting involved in the final round. The final round will also be a two-group league affair. BFF reaffirmed to be strict as players' age will be verified with birth certificates, admit cards of public exams and if required by medical exam.

Each school will be allowed to register a maximum of 20 players. The talented players who catch the eyes of BFF scouts will be invited to our player development programmes.

AFC referee visit

BFF welcomed a refereeing support contingent from AFC to review our officiation at BPL games and to oversee the BFF's referee strategic plan. During the three-day visit, the AFC delegation spoke to our referee committee, administration and representatives from our referee department.

FIFA development visit

BFF welcomed the FIFA development officer for the region who was extremely supportive in adding value to our Forward Programme projects and worked with us in our planning in 2018 and beyond.

President's Visits

FIFA has asked for feedback with regard to their Forward programme. So a number of Member Associations met overseas to discuss this initiative and possible suggestions for the future and possible additional continued support for the member countries. I feel that our relationship with AFC and FIFA must be one that is close, meaningful and interactive. We consistently receive positive comments from both the bodies with regard to what we are trying to do for the development of the game in Bangladesh. Our strategic plan, development of players and coaches and our commitment to improving football has impressed AFC and FIFA. I look forward to 2018 with increased optimism and excitement.