

CHAMP



ASPIRE ACADEMY SPORTS AND EDUCATION MAGAZINE



RELATIONSHIP SPECIALIST

Carlo Ancelotti gives an insight into the philosophy that made him one of the world's most successful football coaches.

NATURAL BORN STRIKER

Henry Onyekuru's inspiring journey from Aspire Football Dreams to the English Premier League

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QATAR WINS FIRST-EVER WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS GOLD MEDAL IN ATHLETICS COURTESY OF MUTAZ

ASPIRE ACADEMY GRADUATE AND QATAR SUPERSTAR HIGH JUMP ATHLETE, MUTAZ ESSA BARSHIM LEAPT TO HIS FIRST OUTDOOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE IN LONDON AT THE 16TH IAAF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS ON 13TH AUGUST 2017. MUTAZ CLAIMED GOLD WITH A JUMP OF 2.35M.

Returning to the stadium where he won his first Olympic medal (bronze) during the 2012 London Olympics, Mutaz lived up to his billing as one of the favourites for gold. Barshim admirably held up his end of the bargain with one of the most dominating high jump performances in recent memory to finally claim an elusive global outdoor title.

Barshim said after his victory, "London is a special place for me. It's where I had my first Olympic medal and the crowd was amazing. I really wanted it. I love the pressure.

That's when I perform the best. I expect from myself much more than everybody. It's motivation. I was so determined to win it. I was expecting it tonight so I am glad I managed to fulfill my target tonight."

Qatar sent a five (5) men team to the 16th IAAF World Championships in London, United Kingdom of whom 3 were Aspire Academy graduates. Mutaz Essa Barshim was joined at the championships by Ashraf El-Seify (Hammer throw) and Ahmad Bedir Magour (Javelin throw).

The trio took made it to the highest stage of the world top athletes for the second time in succession after Rio 2016 Olympics. El Seify's throw of (71.87m) was not enough to make the final 12 in London and Magour acquitted himself well finishing 10th in the final the after best throw of (81.77m.)

Meanwhile in Qatar, Secretary General of the Qatar Olympic Committee and President of the Qatar Athletics Federation, HE Dr Thani Al Kuwari presented the achievement by Mutaz Barshim, who won the high jump gold at the IAAF World Athletics Championships in London to HH the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, HE President of the Qatar Olympic Committee Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al-Thani, and to all Qatari citizens.

Dr Al Kuwari hailed the achievements, saying, "These are the results of support extended by the leadership of Qatar and all those responsible for the Qatari sport. He praised the talented heroes who honored Qatar at the 2017 IAAF World Championships with their outstanding performance, high spirit, determination and unflagging will which they showed throughout the competitions until this achievement.

The QOC Secretary General praised Barshim, wishing him success in his great efforts to take home more achievements and put Qatar's name on the Olympic honor list in Tokyo 2020.

"This achievement as an incentive to continue towards leadership and more achievements ahead at global events such as these World Championships". Dr Al Kuwari congratulated all fans of the games and Qatar sports on this honorable achievement.

In response Mutaz said, "I promise that I will strive and make constant effort to raise the flag of Qatar high in international forums. This World Championships gold medal achievement was the result of the support and attention given by the wise leadership of Qatar. I pledge to make every effort possible to honor the nation in international forums, and I thank all those who have stood with him and supported me in my career to-date as I achieve these sports accolades and wins for the State of Qatar," said the victorious Aspire Academy graduate, Mutaz Essa Barshim.

Qatar received the IAAF flag as the London Championship concluded as it will be Doha's turn host the Championship in Khalifa International Stadium in 2019 and Mutaz will be aiming to defend his title on home soil. Qatar finished the IAAF 2017 London World Championships with two medals, Mutaz's gold and a bronze for Men's 400m runner, Abdalelah Haroun who came third in the final.



HENRY ONYEKURU

FROM ASPIRE FOOTBALL DREAMS TO UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

IN APRIL 2011, A SLENDER NIGERIAN BOY JUST TWO MONTHS SHY OF HIS THIRTEENTH BIRTHDAY WAS ACCEPTED TO BECOME PART OF THE FASCINATING AND UNIQUE HUMANITARIAN FOOTBALL PROJECT, THE ASPIRE FOOTBALL DREAMS (AFD) IN SENEGAL.

Six years later, after turning 20, Henry Chukwuemeka Onyekuru completed a multi-million dollar deal from KAS Eupen in the Belgian Jupiler Pro League to English Premier League side Everton FC. But every story, however remarkable, has a beginning, and this is the story of Henry Onyekuru, Everton striker, and Nigerian international, who is trying to make an impression in the UEFA Champions League after joining Belgian champion RSC Anderlecht on loan for the 2017-18 season.

One of the key objectives of AFD is to give opportunities to young players from developing countries to enable them to reach the heights of international football with their country and world's top clubs. Henry's story ticks that box. Back in 2010, three years after the launch of the AFD project, Henry was one of the thousands of young footballers from Africa, Asia and South America tested and

that year he made the cut as one of three boys from Nigeria to enter the Academy on a full educational scholarship, which offers school education, training, accommodation, sports science services and health services. Thus, Henry began his football career and would go on and graduate from AFD in 2015 to join Aspire Zone Foundation's owned partner club, KAS Eupen. Henry made his debut for Eupen in September 2015 in Belgium's Second Division.

"EXPLOSIVE STRIKER AND HARD WORKER"

Henry is a natural-born striker, full of pace, wizardly dribbling skills, powerful shots and the dynamism to play in a number of attacking roles, either as an out-and-out striker or on either wing. He grabbed his opportunities with both hands when KAS Eupen targeted promotion to Belgian top league, scoring six goals in 19 matches in the 2015-2016 season in support of that achievement at the end of the season. In his first season with Eupen in the Belgian Jupiler Pro League, Onyekuru scored 22 goals in their debut season in top-flight league, finishing as the joint-top scorer in the league.

Jordi Condom, his coach at Eupen last season, said: "Henry is explosive, he's a very talented boy but a good, hard worker



as well. He's a good guy to have in the side because he puts a shift in for the team. And he scores goals. He deserves this turn of events in his life as he heads for bigger things with bigger teams in bigger leagues. We at KAS Eupen will always be proud and grateful for his time with the club and how Aspire Academy helped him realise his dreams."

Henry's successful first season in the Belgium Jupiler Pro League and his goals, unsurprisingly, drew the attention of larger teams in Europe and Everton eventually succeeded in buying him. Henry played 57 times for KAS Eupen scoring 29 goals in all competitions. Such was his impact, in his and the club's debut season in Jupiler Pro League, that his goals consigned seasoned teams like Gent, Lokeren and SV Roeselare either to draws or defeats. On four occasions, Henry scored two goals in a match, including the brace that helped Eupen beat KV Oostende 3-1 in the 2016 Boxing Day league match, the last game before the team headed to Qatar for a winter break training camp held at Aspire Academy.

Henry scored 22 goals in their debut season in top-flight league and finished as joint top scorer with Łukasz Teodorczyk of Anderlecht, who is now a teammate. The Nigerian striker also made his senior international debut in Nigeria's 3-0 win over Togo in a friendly in June 2017.

"GOOD LUCK, HENRY!"

KAS Eupen CEO, Christoph Henkel, said of Henry's departure: "We are very happy for Henry Onyekuru and all he has achieved. This is such a big step in his career and everybody at Eupen wishes him well and every success in his new journey with Everton FC. We thank Henry for his immense contribution and wonderful performances while wearing the KAS Eupen jersey. He scored a total of 24 goals during the championship and cup games last season, making him the team's top scorer. He was part of the prosperous first season of KAS Eupen in the top flight Belgian Jupiler Pro League. Thank you Henry for the memories and many great goals. Goodbye and good luck!"

KAS Eupen board member, Andreas Bleicher, added: "Aspire Academy supported Henry and his family over

many years. They took good care of his medical welfare, his school education and his social life. Thanks to the opportunity provided by KAS Eupen and the work he has put in, he has fulfilled his dream of reaching top-flight European professional football. He has also represented his home country Nigeria at national team level and now will get a chance to play with a top European club in the Champions League. All his dreams have come true but now there is a new challenge for him to tackle, and everyone wishes him the best of luck."

In Doha, people are also proud of the former AFD youngster's achievements, noting that his career proves Aspire's young footballer development philosophy can lead them to top flight professional football. "We are so proud that Henry has signed for Everton," said Ivan Bravo, Director General of Aspire Academy. "This is a fantastic story, fulfilling Aspire Academy's goals and Henry's dreams. It is a fulfilment of the AFD's mission as set out by Aspire Academy in 2007 and we are delighted he has trained and developed at Aspire, reached the Nigerian national team and will now go on to play UEFA Champions League football with Anderlecht. I hope both Henry and the Nigerian people he will represent will be very happy and thankful to Aspire for developing him and giving him the opportunities to reach such impressive heights of international football."



FOREVER GRATEFUL TO ASPIRE



HENRY ONYEKURU SPOKE TO CHAMP ABOUT HIS HUMBLE BEGINNINGS AS A FOOTBALL PLAYER, THE ROLE ASPIRE ACADEMY HAS PLAYED IN HIS DEVELOPMENT AND HIS BREAKTHROUGH IN BELGIUM.



What does Aspire mean to you and your family? In your own words, what would you like to say to the Aspire staff and those from KAS Eupen who have been with you since 2010?

Aspire is my life. They made me, and I am forever grateful to them for what they have done for me and my family. As for the staff at Aspire and at KAS Eupen, they are all great people who want to see every player at Aspire succeed in life.

Nigerian football fans are excited to have a new Super Eagles hitman in you. But they probably know little about the Aspire Football Dreams project that nurtured you. To give them an insight, what would you share with fellow Nigerians and Africans about Aspire Football Dreams and its contribution to the development of African footballers like yourself?

Aspire is really doing a great job by helping a lot of footballers all over the world including African players like me who never imagined having my first senior National team call up at 19, playing in the top league in Belgium at 18 and getting to where I am today. Aspire made this possible and the Aspire Football Dreams project deserves worldwide recognition for the wonderful and unique humanitarian sporting project that it is.

CHAMP: Henry, tell us about the role football plays in your life and how you became involved with Aspire Football Dreams?

Henry Onyekuru: I was born and raised in Lagos in Nigeria. Many children in the country grow up with a passion for football and I was exactly the same. I used to attend football training after school and on weekends. Then one day in 2010, Aspire Academy's scouting programme came to Nigeria. I was just 13 at that time and my coach called me to come and register for the test and compete to be among the best. I'm happy to say I was one of the three Nigerian players selected.

That must have been a proud moment for you.

It was like a dream come true when I first got to the Academy. It wasn't easy for me at first after leaving my family at 13 and travelling to another country where you don't understand the language and the food is different. But I tried to adapt because after all, it's football that brought me to Aspire. I soon settled down and made friends with other players.

You will face KAS Eupen in the league this season. How will you approach the game and what sort of celebration can we expect from you should you score against Eupen?

KAS Eupen is my family you know. But football is football, and every player is expected to do his best whenever he plays. If I score against KAS Eupen, there will be no need to celebrate against my family.

What would you say is the most important thing Aspire Academy did for Henry Chukwemeka Onyekuru and how grateful are you for that?

The most important thing Aspire did for me is helping me to achieve my dream in life and I am grateful to God for the way they have transformed my life.

CARLO ANCELOTTI

“STRONG RELATIONSHIPS ARE THE KEY TO SUCCESS”

THE 58-YEAR-OLD ITALIAN **CARLO ANCELOTTI** IS UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL FOOTBALL COACHES OF THE MODERN GAME. TO DATE, HE IS THE ONLY MANAGER WHO HAS WON THE UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE THREE TIMES. HE COUNTS AMONG HIS LONG LIST OF ACHIEVEMENTS CHAMPIONSHIP TITLES IN ITALY, ENGLAND, FRANCE AND SPAIN. IN JANUARY 2017 HE CAME TO DOHA FOR A TRAINING CAMP AT ASPIRE ACADEMY WITH BAYERN MUNICH AND FOUND TIME TO TALK WITH ASPIRE'S FOOTBALL PERFORMANCE & SCIENCE DIRECTOR VALTER DI SALVO. IN A WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION, ANCELOTTI SHARED HIS THOUGHTS ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF BEING A WORLD-CLASS FOOTBALL COACH.

ROLE MODELS

At the beginning when you are young it's important to have senior guys to look up to and of course you have to choose some positive role models to emulate. I have really good memories of learning from an older player when I was 20 years old and playing in Italy with Parma in Serie C. His name was Mongard, a serious professional who had already played in Serie A and he taught me a lot during that time. Of course, when I played for AS Roma later, I had the privilege to play alongside the Brazilian Falcao, who was one of the best foreign players who ever played in Italy. I learnt from both of them in terms of what it means to be serious and professional as well as focused on your job as a footballer.

MODERN DAY PLAYERS

I believe that today's players are more complete and have improved a lot in many respects compared to my playing days. In the past, the expectation was to stick to a specific position. But now footballers are more versatile and no longer specialise in just one position, as a midfielder or defender for example. Instead they are able to play in a variety of different positions. This has changed the entire game.

THE ROLE OF A MANAGER

As a manager it is important to know the characteristics of your players. You have to be able to improve them individually and also collectively.

HIS COACHES

Cesare Maldini was the coach who had the most influence on me. I was a really young player when I worked with him in Parma and he became like a second father to me. Niels Liedholm was quite similar, really humble, calm and never fought with the players. For the development of a young player like me, that was important and he was very focused on working with young players. On the technical side I improved a lot under him. Sven-Göran Eriksson was different. When he arrived at Roma he was young, but the Swede had an incredible knowledge about tactics. He had new ideas about football. Arrigo Sacchi was the innovator of Italian football, he did something completely new. Not only did he introduce the idea of pressing your opponent, he was also an innovator when it came to training. Compared to previous approaches, it became much more intense and concentrated under him.

PLAYING STYLES

Before I choose a certain style for a team, I first look at the characteristics of the players and after that I put them in a system where they feel comfortable and where they can show their individual qualities best. There is no one single magic system that is guaranteed to win. Systems don't win games, players do. The important thing is to find a system that the players can apply easily and which they are committed to.

THE FUTURE OF TRAINING

I believe that football training in general is going to change in the future. We are going to move closer to the American approach where physical preparation is something players do individually, and they take to the pitch just for tactical sessions. The idea is to reduce the time on the pitch, because in order to play with more intensity you cannot spend more than one hour on the training pitch.

INJURY PREVENTION

In order to avoid injuries we work a lot on flexibility and motion. We simulate a variety of physical situations that

occur on the pitch in our training with the ball. We also have to focus on recovery and recuperation. Due to the high number of games, players don't always have the time to train properly. This means that the period of recuperation after the game can be more important.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA

Data about players' physical performance is really important to me and indispensable as it allows me to control the pace of training sessions. It enables me to judge things like acceleration, deceleration, and distances covered in terms of metres etc. I don't place a lot of emphasis or importance on technical data, because I don't see that there is a correlation between technical data and the result of games.

DEVELOPING YOUNG PLAYERS

For me, the most important part of an academy is that players develop and work on their technical skills, improve their technical ability and also their co-ordination. When young players join the first team, I sometimes see that they lack co-ordination. When players are young, about 20, 21 years of age, they can still learn to improve their tactical skills. But they have to be ready from a technical perspective. I cannot afford to lose time by trying to improve a young players' technique. This has to be taken care of before they join the first team. Of course, players are different. Some are totally developed at 18, others will never be ready for professional football. But the difference is that you can still work on tactics and improve players' understanding of these in a senior team. With technique that would take a lot of time.

VALUES IN FOOTBALL

To me it's very important that players show professionalism. That is something they owe to themselves. I don't get angry if a player misses a chance in a game. But if player doesn't behave properly and acts unprofessionally on or off the pitch, it really makes me angry. If you want to be a professional, you also have to take the responsibility for acting like one.

CLUB PHILOSOPHIES

It is important to know about and understand the culture and history of the club you are working for. It is different to work at Real Madrid, compared to Chelsea and Paris Saint-Germain. Every club has its own strategy. At AC Milan, the club is focused on playing good football, attacking football. Other clubs are primarily focused on winning above all else. When you start at a new club as a coach you have to understand the philosophy in place and then make any necessary adjustments. You don't come to a club to start a revolution.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS

I think everyone has an individual approach when it comes to achieving his goals and being successful. In my opinion the critical thing is the relationship that you have with other people. Therefore I am focused on building strong relationships. Not just with my players and my coaching staff, but with all the people that are involved in the process. I think this is the most important part of my job.

MUTAZ ESSA BARSHIM: COLLECTING GREAT MOMENTS

ASPIRE ACADEMY GRADUATE AND QATAR'S 2016 RIO OLYMPICS SILVER MEDALIST, **MUTAZ ESSA BARSHIM** WAS NAMED **ESQUIRE MIDDLE EAST BEST ATHLETE OF THE YEAR 2016**.

THE QATARI ATHLETE WAS PRESENTED WITH THE AWARD ON TUESDAY 29TH NOVEMBER 2016 AT THE ESQUIRE MIDDLE EAST MAN AT HIS BEST AWARDS HELD IN DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES. A FEW DAYS BEFORE PICKING UP THE AWARD MUTAZ WAS IN ABU DHABI ALSO IN THE UAE WHERE HE WAS A GUEST AT THE FINAL RACE OF THE 2016 FORMULA 1 SEASON COURTESY OF HIS SPONSOR RED BULL. AFTERWARDS HE TOLD CHAMP ABOUT HIS UNFORGETTABLE DAYS IN THE UAE.

What does it mean to you to be named 2016 Esquire Middle East Athlete of the Year?

It's an honour to be named Middle East Athlete of the Year and it certainly will keep me going and motivated to win more accolades and awards. Winning this award has been possible because of the wonderful team that I work with and who look after me. Big thanks for the support and to everyone who has been part of my journey and continues to wish me well, this award is for all of you.

It sounds like you were having a couple of very interesting days in UAE at the end of November.

Definitely. I had the chance to hang out with friends and I thoroughly enjoyed my first time experience at Formula 1 and will definitely go again if not more than once next season. I got round to a number of garages including McLaren, Mercedes, Renault and, of course, Red Bull.

That was quite some interesting dress for Abu Dhabi F1 race and dapper for the Awards how did you decide on what to wear for both events?

Actually I don't know, I just thought well I am going to F1 how do I want to dress, what do I have? I don't want to look sporty of course, I always dress sporty so I don't want to look that way or overdress so settle for some Jordans and ripped out jeans and some kind of 70s look. And for the awards night in Dubai a few days later decided to go for a more movie star 007-esque look with the tuxedo.



Abu Dhabi race was a decider so who were you cheering on?

Well, I was rooting for Lewis Hamilton and he won the race and Nico Rosberg who won the championship I think it's great. I certainly had a wonderful time and met a lot of people my sponsors introduced me to. I spoke to drivers including Jenson Button from McLaren, but we only did small talk, because I know from myself that when I am close to a competition I don't like somebody talking to me as I want to focus.

What do your conversations with other sports personalities usually look like?

First we hardly talk about sports, because that's our daily life, so we usually start off with general chats. Somehow we always end up coming to the question "How do you keep going?" and we talk about upcoming challenges. That's also the kind of chat I had with tennis ace Roger Federer some time ago. At events like that there is small talk and just being there is a great feeling and makes you feel related to fellow sports personalities.





HISTORICAL ACHIEVEMENT AT AL KASS INTERNATIONAL CUP

The sixth edition of the “Al Kass International Cup” football tournament took place at Aspire Academy from 21st to 31st of January and featured a thrilling eleven days of football featuring an array of tomorrow’s stars. Whilst Spanish club side Real Madrid Under-17s were crowned overall winners, hosts Aspire Academy received major plaudits in reaching their first ever “Al Kass International Cup” final.

Aspire Academy’s journey to the final began with an exciting opening match against Raja Casablanca from Morocco. The team held their nerve against tough opposition, with goals from Abdulrasheed Ibrahim and Mekki Tombari securing them a hard earned 2-1 victory.

Next to face Aspire were PSV Eindhoven, and the hosts secured a well-deserved 1-0 win courtesy of a goal from Captain Nasser Alahrak. Their victory sent the Academy team to the top of Group A with a full six points and a place in the quarter final against Esperance de Tunis from Tunisia. With their confidence growing, the Aspire Academy side dispatched Esperance with a convincing 2-1 win. The first goal came thanks to some quick thinking from Hashim Ali who outclassed the opposition’s defence, latching on to a long ball from Mohamed Mohamed before chipping it into the net over the advancing goalkeeper. Aspire added a second through Yusuf Yusuf and although the Tunisian visitors managed to claw one back, the home side proved too strong, securing victory and a place in the semi-final.

Red Bull Salzburg now stood between Aspire and a place in the "Al Kass International Cup" Final. Heading into the semi-final, the Austrian side had played some of the best football in the tournament and were considered amongst the favourites to lift the cup. And for the first time in the competition Aspire were first to concede a goal as Red Bull Salzburg took a 1-0 lead into the half time break. But with incredible home support urging them on, the boys from Aspire played with real spirit and responded to the challenge perfectly. Shortly after coming off the substitute's bench, Abdulrasheed Ibrahim equalized. Then in the dying minutes of the game, Nasser Alrahak converted a penalty. The home side stood firm against a final push from the RB Salzburg, securing a 2-1 win and with it a place in their first ever Al Kass International Cup final.

Aspire Academy faced the formidable Real Madrid in the much anticipated final, now appearing in their third "Al-Kass International Cup". During a tense first half, Aspire resisted continued pressure from the Spaniards and came close on occasion including from a number of set pieces. But despite a number of good chances, neither team was able to break the deadlock.

The two sides continued to press each other hard during the second half, and it was not until the 79th minute when Madrid took the lead. Substitute Marvin Akinlabi skipped past Aspire's Mohammed Al Naimi and sent in a low cross which bounced around before an attempted clearance deflected off Jose Antonio Simal's shins, hitting the back of the net and giving Madrid the lead.

Aspire pushed hard for an equalizer, but in the 89th minute Real Madrid substitute Antonio Casas Marin put the game beyond reach and secured the first Al Kass International Cup win for his side with a beautifully struck volley that beat keeper Shehab Ellethy. Nonetheless, this year's tournament represented an incredible result for Aspire Academy with the team reaching their first ever Al Kass International Cup final and impressing fans and spectators alike with the quality of their play at every stage of the tournament.

ASPIRE ACADEMY'S ROAD TO THE 2017 AL KASS INTERNATIONAL CUP FINAL

Group Stage: Raja Casablanca (won 2-1)

Group Stage: PSV Eindhoven (won 1-0)

Quarter Final: Esperance de Tunis (won 2-1)

Semi-Final: Red Bull Salzburg (won 2-1)

Final: Real Madrid (lost 2-0)

FACTS & FIGURES

Teams making their Al Kass International Cup debuts:

A number of teams were new to the tournament this year. They included Raja Casablanca from Morocco, FC Bayern München and Eintracht Frankfurt from Germany, AS Roma from Italy, and Dutch team PSV Eindhoven.

Top goal scorer: 4 (Franck Junior EVINA, FC Bayern Munich; Miguel Baeza PEREZ, Real Madrid; Kaito MORI, Kashiwa Reysol)

Player of the tournament: Miguel Baeza PEREZ , Real Madrid

Goalkeeper of the tournament: Tomo CHIWATA, Kashiwa Reysol

Fair play award: KASHIWA REYSOL

FINAL RESULTS

1. Real Madrid
2. Aspire Academy
3. FC Red Bull Salzburg
4. Eintracht Frankfurt
5. Kashiwa Reysol
6. Paris Saint-Germain
7. PSV Eindhoven
8. Esperance De Tunis
9. Al Ahli
10. AS Roma
11. FC Bayern München
12. Raja Casablanca

RIGHT METHODOLOGY PAYS OFF

Bruno Pinheiro, Head Coach of the impressive Aspire Academy U17 team explains the key factors that helped his team on their way to the final.

Starting to believe

I think we didn't realise at the start how far we could go. Our aim was always to take it game by game, seeking to improve on our last performance. We set out to improve certain aspects from each previous game, and we'd target this as our main aim in our next match. I think this was good for us because it meant we didn't create pressure for ourselves by focusing exclusively on trying to get a result, but instead focused on the process. It was only when we reached the final that we then said to ourselves, "Come on, we can win this." So in the final, of course the result means everything. So you lose a bit of focus on the process that you've been following. But that's understandable, since the final is a one-off. And not only that but it was our first final too.

Winning culture that inspires

This is my second "Al Kass International Cup" but first as coach in charge. What's clear to me is that we can compete with anyone and were able to match all of the teams that were participating in the Cup in terms of quality and talent. You cannot always completely control whether you win or lose. But what you can control is the process, the methodology you follow and the way you work, and how you pass the message on to the players so that they believe in the process. I think we did this effectively this time, and the players responded very well and of course reached the final. It's important to have the self-belief that we can go up against any side in a tournament such as this.

I'm sure this year's fantastic run in the competition is going to inspire future generations of players representing Aspire at the "Al Kass International Cup" and other tournaments. That's because our players have been watching this tournament for years. And of course, we want to develop a culture of winners. And this year's success might be good in that sense in that it demonstrates to future generations that it's possible to win and go far. If you believe you can do it, then you can achieve your goals.

The Mission

As soon as I was appointed to the job, I got to work on planning for success. The beauty of Aspire Academy is that the work we do here is an ongoing process. It does not matter who the coach is and whether they have been with the team for a month or one year. That's because there is one single methodology, and we all follow it. So I was well aware that the team's performance wasn't down to my work alone, but represents the combined efforts of many people at Aspire Academy including those who have worked with the players before. In my mind, I understood that I needed to take the time to establish my own role within this process, to start by analysing the games that the team had played before, try to understand where I can add my own touches and enhance existing progress whilst at the same time build on the continued success of the Aspire Academy football methodology.

Handling the pressure of playing at home

The aim is to start off in a tournament like this as strongly as you can. Obviously with each win you have early on, the better your chances of reaching the quarter finals. But I was pleasantly surprised at how well the players delivered because they were under much greater pressure than I had realised. Despite our win, I felt that the first match had been very hard. Not necessarily in terms of the opposition. But because the players themselves were heavily weighed down by the pressure they placed themselves under – and not wanting to fail. The boys initially struggled to remain calm and follow our usual pattern of play, methodology and process. They had a hard time working out how to manage expectations and focus on their football in ways that we had practiced in training. First games are never easy, and good teams often fail to make it as far in a tournament as they might be expected to because they don't play well in the first game. In fairness, we were fortunate to win our first game against Raja Casablanca despite not playing our best. After this win, the team handled pressure much better and started to play in a more relaxed fashion. From this point on they found their confidence and knew they could compete against anyone.

"THE WORK NEVER STOPS"

REACHING THE FINAL OF THE 2017 AL "KASS INTERNATIONAL CUP" WAS A HISTORICAL MOMENT FOR THE ASPIRE ACADEMY FOOTBALL PROGRAMME. A FEW WEEKS AFTER THIS BIG ACHIEVEMENT, **CHAMP** MET THREE OF THE ACADEMY TEAM'S MAIN PROTAGONISTS TO REFLECT ON THE TOURNAMENT: DEFENDER **SALEH SAEED BINHALABI**, FORWARD **KHALED MOHAMMED SALEH** AND GOALKEEPER **SHEHAB MAMDOUH ELLETHY**.

You had a great run at the 2017 Al Kass International Cup. Which moment will stay with you the longest?

Saleh Saeed Binhalabi: For me it was when I heard the final whistle in the semi-final against Red Bull Salzburg. It was a tough game from the very beginning and we all gave all we had, so it was such a relief when it was over and we knew that we were still in the tournament.

Khaled Mohammed Saleh: What I will never forget is the great chemistry we had in our team. We all understood each other and were a solid unit that played and synchronised well. The coach helped a lot with his instructions and we performed as per those instructions to reach the final.

Shehab Mamdouh Ellethy: What Khaled said is true - we tried to listen to every instruction our coach gave us, to be disciplined in training, and to show a professional attitude at all times. That laid the foundation for everything.

How important was the win in the opening game?

Binhalabi: There was a lot of pressure on us before the first game. We knew that winning would be the key to make making it into the knock-out stage. We were nervous, even when we were two goals up. Raja got one back but we got the result we wanted and that's what mattered in the end.

Ellethy: The first game in every tournament is always the most difficult one. We were nervous, but our coach found the right words at halftime and calmed us down. We could have played better but, like Saleh said, the 2-1 result in our favour gave us the confidence we needed to continue our successful start.

When you went into this tournament, did you think about reaching the final?

Binhalabi: If you play in such a tournament, of course you want to win it. It was on our home turf, we had a lot of family and friends watching, so, naturally reaching the final and winning was our ultimate goal throughout. But we knew it would be tough and that no Aspire Academy team had done it before.

Saleh: When I was younger, I watched the older teams play in the tournament and hoped that one day I would play in the Al Kass Cup as well. And then it happened! Suddenly, we were in the spotlight, our games were being broadcast live on national television, and people started to recognise us. And the longer we remained in the tournament, the more we wanted to make it to the final.

And you did make it to the final, but what was the secret behind this achievement?

Ellethy: We were taking it game by game, thinking game by game. We prepared for each opponent and our coaching staff worked hard to keep us focused so we didn't start dreaming of the final too early.

Binhalabi: We might have been nervous at the start of the tournament but, the truth is, we were not scared of competing with these big clubs because we have been doing that at this level for years in the "Tri-Series Tournament" at Aspire Academy. So we knew we had the quality to face teams with different styles and philosophies. Reaching the final was also the result of this learning process that every one of us had been involved in since joining Aspire.

Saleh: That's definitely true and also the team had a really good balance at the time of the tournament. Of course, we were very focused on training and on game preparation, but we also did things for entertainment on our off days to relax and clear our heads.

What was bigger in the end? The frustration of losing the final or the satisfaction of playing a remarkable Al Kass International Cup?

Binhalabi: We showed a strong performance in the final and lost against a strong Real Madrid side. So, despite the result, we can be proud of ourselves. We gained a lot of experience from this tournament, playing against different teams, different styles - it really was a mix of teams and challenges we had to overcome. Each match we played had beneficial lessons that helped us develop.

Saleh: We are definitely proud of our performance at the Al Kass tournament - our team was the first Aspire Academy team to make it to the final. That's something nobody can take away from us. But we also know that this is still a youth tournament and we all have to keep working hard so we can make it as professional players. The work never stops.

Ellethy: I hope the next generations of Aspire Academy players will follow our footsteps. My advice to them is not to be nervous in the games, to focus, work hard and listen carefully to the instructions of their coaches. And maybe, one day, one of our teams will go one step further than we did and keep the Cup here in Doha.



“PLAY FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME”

THIS YEAR'S STAR GUEST OF THE “AL KASS INTERNATIONAL CUP” WAS THE FORMER FRENCH FOOTBALLER **DAVID TREZEGUET**. THE 1998 FIFA WORLD CUP WINNER AND EURO 2000 CHAMPION SHARED HIS EXPERIENCE WITH THE YOUNG PLAYERS AT A PANEL DISCUSSION AND SHARED HIS INSIDE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT YOUTH FOOTBALL WITH CHAMP AFTERWARDS.



David, you were invited to the 2017 “Al Kass International Cup” in Doha and had the chance to see some of the world’s best U17 players. What is your impression of this event?

Playing in tournaments like this is extremely important for the development of these young players, because this competition has an exceptional level and it’s a good opportunity for them to play against teams from different continents. I could see that the players are very happy and proud about the opportunity to be part of this great event.

These young players all dream of becoming a professional footballer. Is there a piece of advice you can share with them that can help them in order to reach this goal?

Remember that you are primarily a footballer and you should strive to play as best as you can and always have the love and passion for what you do which is to play football. There is so much pressure on young players with agents, clubs and parents all keen to get the best for the young player and of course money has been thrown into it too, so amongst all this in modern football remember to first play for the love of the game and enjoy your football first and the rest will come accordingly and in its own time.

In course of the tournament it was announced that you are have joined ICSS as “Save the Dream” ambassador. What do you expect from this cooperation?

I think that the initiative follows a noble cause and I am proud to be part of it and that I can help them with my name to promote their message to protect the core values of sports. I am looking forward to developing a lot of exciting things together.

How do you feel about Aspire Academy and its national football program?

It’s quite exceptional. I saw some games of them and we cannot forget that these players are the future of Qatar’s football national team in 2022. I feel that Qatar wants to raise its level of football and they brought a lot of international experts to this Academy in order to achieve this objective. And I got the impression that everyone that is involved in this process is very motivated and giving 110 percent to do so.





CHARTERING THE WAY FOR QATAR'S SPORTS FUTURE

Qatar is a nation driven to develop sporting participation and excellence in the four corners of the country. To fulfill this ambition the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) has embarked on a program to provide strategic direction and identify key initiatives for the sports sector. One of these initiatives is the preparation of Qatar's athlete development pathway to guide the development of athletes, to promote best practice, thus permitting optimal development of the country's next elite sport champions. To get this ambitious program started, the QOC engaged and tapped into the expertise of Aspire Academy and after four years of hard work, the outcome could finally be presented: **"Kun Riyadi – Be an Athlete"**.

Motivated by Qatar's Sport Sector Vision 2011 – 2016, the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) saw the need to provide a structured and strategic model to allow Qatar to develop athletes in 30 sports and 39 sport disciplines to their full potential. It was clear from the beginning that only a team of experts could be up to this task and after a meeting with Ivan Bravo, Director General of Aspire Academy, the QOC entrusted Aspire Academy with this responsible project. "Our team of world-class experts from the sports department, in collaboration with colleagues from across the Academy teamed up with our partners from the QOC and Qatar sports federations to implement this remarkable initiative. It will hone our athletes' talents,

enabling them to achieve their maximum potential from young age throughout their careers", Bravo remembers the beginning of the Academy's involvement in 2012.

The next step was to assemble a project team that was qualified to take on this challenge. Being put in charge as project manager, Dr Hazem Fareed Anabtawi, Deputy Sport Director at Aspire Academy, started to look for the right people. "It was essential to include experts that could cover all the required areas and who were willing to invest a lot of their time and effort over and above their ordinary obligations at Aspire." Out of all full-time staff members, Melanie Longdill (Sport Strategy and Pathway Specialist), Scott Richardson (Implementation and Governance Specialist), Dr Jaime Diaz-Ocejo (Sport Psychology Specialist) and Manaf Kamil (IT and Smartabase representative) completed the project team that was also supported by task team manager Ivan Bravo and the planning and development department at the Qatar Olympic Committee.

Every project, large or small begins by asking what you want to achieve. These objectives were set by the QOC and in short, the task of the project team was to develop an integrated platform, which incorporates all stages of athlete development, including personal information, performance data, career and financial management, federation information and technical analysis for coaches.

After initial discussions of desired outcomes the project team arranged a timeline strategy to ensure project feasibility and on time handover. Upon understanding the project goals and requirements, milestones were placed and the project team enabled, the first steps of translating the project vision into a workable design. "The project team met at least once a week. There were things, where we were working together as a team and were inputs from everyone were welcome. When it came to more technical things it required the know-how of the specific experts," said Dr Hazem Anabtawi. Working closely with the Aspire Academy's management team, they were able to develop project specification, costings and timelines. The strategic timeline was broken into review, development, refinement and delivery.

MAIN OBJECTIVE:
ESTABLISH AN ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR QATAR

Goal 1:
Develop Sport Specific, Athlete Development Models for:

- 21 national federations within the Qatar Olympic Committee
- Women in sport
- Sport with disability

Goal 2:
Develop a National Management System to support the Qatar Athlete Development Framework and Sport Specific Models



The review phase included the review of international peer reviewed literature on athlete development and international athlete development frameworks and models. This important stepping stone ensured that all background research was completed prior to the development of Qatar's model. The next step was the development phase that included a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) and PEST (Political, Economic, Social, and Technological) analysis of all national federations in Qatar allowing the project team to understand the strengths and weaknesses across all federations. As a result of the review phase and the country analysis it allowed them to design two possible frameworks for Qatar and conclude the one that best suited the sporting environment.

Based on specific local research the project team was able to also create a unique brand - "Kun Riyadi - Be an Athlete" - that encapsulates the dreams and ambitions of the entire population of Qatar, encouraging people to become involved with and participate in sport as a way to improve their everyday life and sporting ambitions. "The goal was to create a universal icon that moves with you,



takes you in the right direction and stands for everyone and for every ability," Dr Hazem Anabtawi describes the idea behind the logo that resembles an arrow.

The newly branded Qatar framework was then used to create a standard model design that was used to confirm sports and search for the world's best sporting experts to write the technical, tactical, physical and psychological considerations for each development phase within each sport specific model. With the support of the Australian Geoff Hunt, one of the best players in the history of squash and now a very successful coach, who had worked at Aspire Academy for many years, the first model was developed. "That was a very important step within the process, because thanks to this poster model we could show the candidates what we were expecting of them", recalls Dr Fareed Anabtawi. The technical expert search had international reach with close to 1,000 applicants from 38 nations. After a pre-selection, and Skype-meetings,

face to face workshops were held in Australia, USA and Qatar to discuss the details of the cooperation.

Upon the confirmation of the experts the refinement phase began that included the knowledge of 35 world class experts in their sports and sports development. "The experts had four months to work on their topics and it was, of course, very important that the models were deep enough in order to guarantee a successful implementation at a later stage." Throughout this phase the project team created 39 sport specific models for 30 sports, a guideline book for athletes with impairment and completed the final chapters of the Qatar Athlete Development encyclopedia.

The final delivery phase included the handover of the project to the Qatar Olympic Committee on the 8th November 2016 in the presence of Qatar Olympic Committee Secretary General, Dr Thani Abdulrahman Al-Kuwari, Aspire Zone Foundation CEO, Mohamed Khalifa Al-Suwaidi and Ivan Bravo. Aspire Academy's Director General expressed gratitude to H.E Sheikh Joaan Bin Hamad Al-Thani, President of Qatar Olympic Committee and the Qatar Olympic Committee for their faith in trusting

Aspire Academy to partner with in this project. "The needs, requirements and specifications from different federations were taken into account to create a truly comprehensive model. I believe that such an ambitious project will have a significant and positive impact on athletic development for generations to come."

Furthermore, the handover included recommendations of the project team and further developments of the Qatar Athlete Development Website and iPad applications to create stakeholder support for the athlete development process. Qatar Olympic Committee Secretary General, Dr Thani Abdulrahman Al-Kuwari in his remarks, said Qatar Olympic Committee was grateful to Aspire Academy for its great work in conducting the project work, "As Qatar Olympic Committee, we will supervise the implementation of Kun Riyadi which we intend to start with 3 to 5 federations to begin with and then bring more on board gradually and thereby change the road map of sport in Qatar."

THE FIVE PILLARS OF KUN RIYADI

Qatar's Athlete Development Pathway is a framework specific to Qatar that considers introduction, training, competition and retention. It is a birth to end of life program, where each aspect is as important as the next. Considerations taken into the framework development include every aspect of human development and are based on the promise that children must be effectively developed to have success in their life in sport. Athletes that progress through the pathway will come out more skilled and more supported than if they were training and identified in isolation. The pathway will ensure that girls and boys are allowed to reach their maximum potential. Find out more about the 5 individual phases of the pathway.

THE SPORTS COVERED BY KUN RIYADI

Archery, Athletics (Track & Field), Badminton, Basketball, Bowling, Boxing, Chess, Cycling (Road/Track/MTB), Diving, Equestrian, Fencing, Golf, Gymnastics, Handball, Hockey, Judo, Karate, Modern Pentathlon, Rowing, Sailing, Shooting, Squash, Swimming, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Tennis, Volleyball, Water Polo, Weightlifting, Wrestling, Athletes with Impairment.



1 PLAY & EXPLORATION

During early childhood (0-7 years), it is imperative that play and exploration programs are designed around critical periods of accelerated adaptation to sport skill learning. These periods of development represent the time when children are ready and able to develop fundamental sport skills and abilities such as running, jumping and throwing. Establishing a core set of motor skills early in life enables children to gain a sense of achievement and establish a positive relationship and physical activity.

2 PRACTICE & PARTICIPATION

Optimal developmental during middle childhood (8-12) is achieved by focusing on speed, agility, spatial awareness, coordination and rhythm and dynamic balance, all of which are related sport skills that will serve them well in a range of sports. Children who do not develop their fundamental motor skills by age 12 are unlikely to reach their genetic athletic potential. Successful and positive experiences with sport at a young age, coupled with the acquisition of transferable sports skills, will enable children to become proficient in a number of different sports.

3 DEVELOPMENT & REFINEMENT

The talent identification, development and refinement phase (13-18 years) provides opportunity for support to be tailored to individuals and allow full potential to be reached. In competitive sport today, genetics, training environment and mental aptitude all play critical factors in determining success. It is imperative that any identification and development pathway program considers all of these dynamics.

4 ACHIEVE EXCELLENCE

Achieving excellence (19+ years) is achieved through a specific and well planned practice, training, competition and recovery regime. This phase is the most intense, requiring world class training methods, equipment and facilities. The integration of sport science and sport medicine support are integral to achieving maximum results.

5 RETIRE & REMAIN ACTIVE

Retain, retire and remaining active occurs throughout the lifespan. Young athletes can enter this stage at my age. Children, teenagers and adults may decide to continue to play sport as a coach or sport official. A positive experience is key to retaining athletes after they leave the excellence phase. The re-direction of athletes should be encouraged after retirement.



ASPIRE GRADUATE CROWNED ARAB U-21 CHAMPION

Aspire Academy graduate Mohamed Adulwahhab was crowned Arab U-21 Table Tennis champion after some impressive victory at the "Seamaster 2017 Arab Cup" in Muscat, Oman which saw fourteen (14) countries participate at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. The 16th edition of Arab Championships was held for the first time in the Sultanate of Oman and ran from 15-20th August 2017.

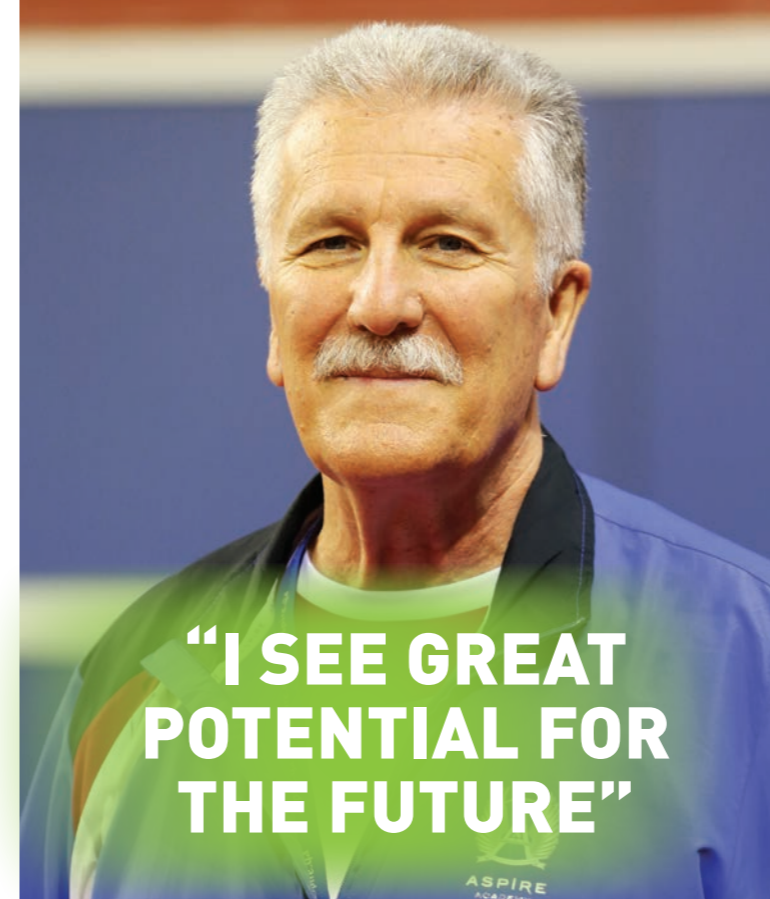
Mohamed Adulwahhab won the junior title (U21) beating the Algerian Qara Ali Naim in the final 4-2 after a very strong match (9/11, 11/4, 11/6, 11/6, 9/11 and 11/7). The victory brought him, his second Arab title after his gold medal in Jordan in 2015 in the U18 (cadet) category.

"This was the most important championship for me this year, and it was my main goal to win this tournament. It's a great achievement for myself, my country and my federation, since the tournament was really difficult from the beginning. The games were really close, but I managed to win gold in the end and that's all that matters," Adulwahhab said after his victory. "Aspire Academy and the QTTF are the main reasons after God that I am able to do well in my sport, I'm really grateful to them and I dedicate my achievements to them," said the athlete who recently graduated from Aspire Academy and describes qualifying to compete at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo as one of his next big target goals.

Adulwahhab did also do well in doubles: Together with Aspire Academy student-athlete Nawaf Al Malki he reached the U21 Men's Doubles final, losing 3-0 to the Algerian team Qadra Ali Naim and Yanis Douify to finish in second place and get the silver medal (9/11, 6/11, and 11/13).

Aspire Academy Table Tennis head coach, Peter Karlsson, said about Adulwahhab, "I've been working with Adulwahhab since middle of March this year. He is a very professional table tennis player and commit 100% to the process. Becoming Arab champion in U21 is for him a very big achievement and confirms that he is on the right way. We have to remind ourselves that he is only 18 years old. The long term goal for Adulwahhab is to qualify for Tokyo Olympics 2020. This result will definitely give him a boost in the right direction. In Oman he was able to stay mentally calm, balanced and get maximum out of his game. This is the main challenge for a top athlete: To perform at the right moment!!!"

The championship saw the participation of 15 Arab countries: Qatar, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Comoros, Somalia, Mauritania, Djibouti, Sudan, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Palestine, Yemen and hosts Oman. The championships saw a record number of participation with 119 players and 80 officials taking part.



"I SEE GREAT POTENTIAL FOR THE FUTURE"

AFTER ALMOST A DECADE AT ASPIRE ACADEMY, IT'S TIME TO SAY GOODBYE TO TABLE TENNIS HEAD COACH **ZLATKO NOVAKOVIC**. JOINING ASPIRE IN 2007 AS ASSISTANT COACH TO JÖRGEN PERSSON, NOVAKOVIC TOOK OVER AS HEAD COACH THREE YEARS LATER, A POSITION HE HELD UNTIL HIS RETIREMENT AT THE END OF 2016. DURING THIS TIME HE HELPED SHAPE ASPIRE'S TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME – ONE THAT HAS PRODUCED MANY SUCCESSFUL YOUNG PLAYERS, HELPING ASPIRE ENTER A NEW ERA OF SPORTING SUCCESS. IN THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEW, THE CROATIAN REFLECTS ON HIS TEN YEARS IN QATAR AND REVEALS WHAT HE IS GOING TO MISS THE MOST.

Zlatko, you retired after spending almost a decade as table tennis coach at Aspire Academy. How do you feel about leaving the Academy and Qatar after such a long time?

Ten years is a long time for sure but I am so happy I had the opportunity to work here. Before joining Aspire I was working with top-level players in several European countries and I was actually looking for the chance to go back to my roots and work with young players. Aspire offered me this challenge and I have never looked back.

What did you know about Aspire Academy before joining it in 2007?

I met former Aspire Academy Sports Director Andreas Bleicher at the World Championships in China. That was the first time I was introduced to the work Aspire was doing and when I got the offer to come and work here in Doha, I did some research to see just how far the young Academy had come. It was clear to see that there was real ambition to build the world's best sports academy and I wanted to be part of this process. The decision to come and join the team was not a hard one.

When you came to Doha Aspire Academy was relatively young. How has it progressed in the past ten years?

There has been a lot of progress. Most importantly, the structure that was established back then has been proven to work very well, and it is still in place today. Aspire provides the ideal environment for athletes to develop in, and they really benefit from the integrated support of the sport science team. Also, the status of sports in the country has increased significantly and the reputation of the Aspire Academy has grown over time which has also helped the organisation develop. When I came here we only had four boys in the table tennis programme, but over time that number has increased. Now we constantly have a team of between ten and 13 boys each year. Aspire Academy is definitely on a successful path and will undoubtedly reach its goals.

How much potential does table tennis have in the region?

When I came here, neither Qatar, nor other countries from the Middle East had players in the world rankings at a cadet or junior level. Five years ago two of our students entered the world ranking for the first time. Since then we have constantly had four to six of our athletes in the top 50 and top 100 of these rankings, which is an amazing achievement.

Do you consider these rankings as the biggest achievement in your time as head coach? Looking at the stats, during your time at Aspire, Academy student-athletes won seven gold medals at the GCC Championships, four in Arab Championships, 19 in the ITTF Junior World Tour Circuit. The list goes on...

It's definitely good to have players competing at a top level in international events. Also, for the first time in the history of Qatar's table tennis, we had a player qualify for Youth Olympic Games – our student-athlete Abdulrahman Al-Naggar in 2014. Nineteen of our students have already played for Qatar's national teams in different age groups and some have represented the country's senior team in major competitions. Four of our students have qualified for the final of the ITTF World Junior Circuit in the last two years, where only the best 16 players of this tournament series are allowed to participate. I think that some of our students have great potential to qualify for the Youth Olympics. At some point, we might even see them represent Qatar at the Olympic Games at a senior level.

That sounds very promising. Nonetheless, is there something that can be done to further improve the level of table tennis in Qatar?

Table tennis is a very technical sport and that's why it's very important to start working with players at a very young age – around Grade 7 and 8 years is best. We started focusing on youth development at this age with the pre-Aspire programme two years ago, meaning when they arrive at Aspire they already have a good level of knowledge about the sport. We have many talented kids here thanks to a very good level of cooperation with the Qatar Table Tennis Association. At Aspire we provide them with the best environment to develop their skills. This programme will make them better and better and I hope that more and more kids will take up the sport.

What are going to miss most of your time in Qatar?

My students. Life is about what we remember and I will remember many kind people that I met here in Qatar.

CAPITALIZING ON THE DATA ADVANTAGE

THE LAUNCH OF THE QATAR FOOTBALL ANALYTICS DASHBOARD – A SET OF TOOLS THAT WILL HELP ANALYSE AND SUPPORT THE PERFORMANCE OF FOOTBALL PLAYERS IN QATAR – IN 2017 DOES NOT ONLY PUT QATAR ON THE TOP SPOT WHEN IT COMES TO FOOTBALL PERFORMANCE. IT MARKS ANOTHER MILESTONE IN A PROCESS STARTED IN 2010 BY QATAR STARS LEAGUE (QSL), QATAR FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION (QFA) AND ASPIRE ACADEMY THAT AIMED TO ALIGN THE PERFORMANCE SIDE OF QATAR'S FOOTBALL.



piece of the puzzle was added in 2013, when performance analysts were hired, so each club had a designated person in charge of collecting data and visualizing information. Undoubtedly a key aspect of the entire process, since it guaranteed the clubs a constant access to the information, that was no longer directly connected only to the position of head coaches, who could move on after a few seasons or even a shorter period of time.

"The overall challenge was, of course, to find the most efficient way to organize and manage the huge amount of data that has been collected over time", explains the Italian. Therefore, the Football Performance and Science Department of Aspire Academy developed a high level data base running on Microsoft Excel. Thanks to this dashboard, a fast flow of data between the QSL clubs and national teams could be guaranteed. Club coaches were able to access valuable information of players when they were playing and training with Qatar's national team and vice versa.

A smoothly running system that reached a new high in 2015, when Aspire Academy joined forces with SAP, software

and technology leader in business applications, and CLARIBA, an independent, expert analytics consultancy. "We developed the most advanced and sophisticated dashboard in the world of football performance", states

directly to the system and supports the coaches to balance the training load accordingly.

"The Qatar Football Analytics Dashboard for the first time will reach the player. It is primarily designed to support individual players by providing them with detailed personal data and information analyzing their performance. Equipped with this information, they are able to push themselves continually to improve their game. We want Qatari players to first compete with themselves and to push



Valter Di Salvo. The first beneficiaries are the coaches, who can easily access the data about players, positions or teams via their laptops or smartphones.

"There are millions of numbers in the database, but the

their performance to the limit, before to compete against their opposition. Once a player has a clear understanding of his stats and performance in training and matches, he is then able to work with coaches and to focus on improving his game and in doing so he becomes more competitive. Ultimately this all helps the development of football in Qatar."

Jorge Fossati, coach of the senior national team, was one of the managers present at the launch of the dashboard in February and like many others, he congratulated Aspire Academy, QFA and QSL to this visionary project. "This is a most welcome initiative and a very useful tool to support the development of football in Qatar. No doubt science has a useful part to play in improving and developing players' performance and I expect there will be strong interest of the players in embracing a tool such as this which offers real potential to improve their performance."

One of the 400 Qatar Stars League players that were invited to the presentation of the dashboard at Aspire Zone was former FC Barcelona star Xavi Hernandez. "This application will help us all to improve. Each training and game becomes like an exam and you can look at the results right afterwards and compare them to earlier performances or other players", said the Al Sadd player. Qatar's National Team and Al-Rayyan defender Khaled Al Zakiba added, "Being able to see where you are every day is a great tool to keep your performance level high and being able to spot weaknesses is a great help in order to improve." And Lekhwiya center back Chico Flores concluded that, "Working with this app is an extra motivation for us to try to get the maximum out of ourselves and that will improve Qatar's entire football."

dashboard is very flexible, so every coach can choose the variables and benchmarks he considers most important. In match analysis alone, there are 180 variables to choose from, which results in 16.000 possible combinations." Match analysis is one of the four available categories the dashboard has to offer. Besides offering data on assessment and training, the video section offers videos of each players' games and training sessions and an elaborate video library including all QSL and national team games.

The new dashboard is designed to actively involve every QSL player. They can easily find out about their strengths, weaknesses in order to improve and push their limits. Since all data is benchmarked with actual and historical QSL data dating back to 2011, it is able to compare players with each other, and find out in what stats they are among the best QSL players and where you still have room for improvement. Another feature of the players' mobile phone application is a tool that monitors their wellness status. Every morning the players are asked to rate their level of fatigue, muscle soreness and sleep. This information goes

The acquisition of data has revolutionized the world of sports. More than ever before, coaches and athletes rely on detailed information to be able to turn the right screws to guarantee the best possible results. In terms of Qatar's football, this revolution started in 2010 when three of the countries' big players in football joined forces and installed a number of tools to collect the required data.

Three times a year the involved teams, including the 14 QSL-clubs and two of Qatar's National Teams (A-team and Olympic Team), are assessed at Aspire Academy. Prozone systems installed in all stadiums and at the Academy pitches track games and deliver thousands of useful information about the physical and tactical nature of each match. A structure has been established to control the training load using equipment such as heart rate sensors by POLAR and every step of every player is recorded by a GPS system. "These actions laid the foundation for where we are right now", confirms Prof. Valter Di Salvo, Director of Football Performance & Science at Aspire Academy.

According to Prof. Valter Di Salvo, another significant



ASPIRE ACADEMY CELEBRATES MILESTONE 10TH GRADUATION CEREMONY

Aspire Academy celebrated its 10th graduation for the student athletes since opening its doors in 2004. Thirty-eight student athletes graduated at a ceremony to mark the end of the 2016-17 academic year held on the 14th of June 2017 in Aspire Dome. The ceremony was graced by Guest of Honor Dr. Hassan Rashid Al-Derham, President of Qatar University, Mohammad Khalifa Al-Suwaidi, CEO of Aspire Zone Foundation; Ivan Bravo, Director General of Aspire Academy; Badr Al-Hay, Director of Education and

Student Affairs, Aspire Academy; Jassim Al-Jaber, School Principal, Aspire Academy; and members of the Academy's senior management, teachers and parents of the student-athletes.

In his address, Aspire Academy Director General, Ivan Bravo implored the students to embrace and aspire to virtues of upholding family and country amongst others. "You have learnt a lot and been exposed to a number of values and examples of how to be a citizen who is credit to his country and I urge you to emulate the culture and have regard to humanity that is exhibited and so well exemplified by Qataris. I have been privileged to know of one such Qatari who in his own quiet manner and without balking to the difficulties and challenges along the way was able to put together an arrangement that brought a team of Syrian refugee teenage boys from Jordan to play in the Al Kass International Cup here in Qatar in January 2017. It's a story I would like you all to think about and be encouraged to be doers and make your contribution to humanity as best as you can in your own way and Aspire Academy has helped set you on that path," said Ivan Bravo.



SPIRE

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10th

Aspire Academy
Graduation Ceremony

Mr. Badr Jassim Al Hay, Director of Education and Student Affairs, encouraged graduates to make the most of the platform Aspire Academy has created for them, "You set of on the next phase of your life's journey, equipped with many good tools you have acquired during your time at Aspire. Go and make us and yourselves proud as you continue working hard to be citizens Qatar will be proud of. Of course you are always welcome back and Aspire Academy is your home. Congratulations on the culmination of your hard work with this graduation today, you are true champions in life, go on and live out this mantra."

The student-athletes of the class of 2017 come from football, athletics, refereeing, table tennis or gymnastics, and join some of Qatar's top and fast rising sportsmen and former scholars who graduated from Aspire Academy such as the likes of Mutaz Essa Barshim, Ashraf El-Seify, Abdulla Al-Tamimi, Abdelkarim Hassan, Akram Afif and Abubaker Haydar who have excelled and are competing at the very top of their respective sports.

MEET THE GRADUATES

1. Saud Mansour Al-Ali
Sport: Football. Born: 26.01.2000
2. Salem Atiq Al-Abdulla
Sport: Football Referee. Born: 02.05.1999
3. Nuh Abdulkadir Andu
Sport: Athletics. Born: 06.04.1999
4. Shabib Nasser Al-Dosari
Sport: Athletics. Born: 18.05.1998
5. Mohammed Abdelwahab A. Hussein
Sport: Table Tennis. Born: 22.07.1999
6. Abdullah Abdulrahman Al-Janahi
Sport: Gymnastics. Born: 23.12.1999
7. Ahmad M. Yasser Sebaie
Sport: Football. Born: 06.01.1999
8. Ali Mohammed Al-Naimi
Sport: Gymnastics. Born: 18.04.1999
9. Majed Sultan Al-Mesalam
Sport: Football Referee. Born: 11.01.1999
10. Nasser Saleh Al-Harbi
Sport: Football. Born: 22.09.1999
11. Jassim Mohammed Abdulrahman
Sport: Athletics. Born: 15.08.1999
12. Abdulrahman Mohamed Mostafa
Sport: Football. Born: 05.05.1997
13. Abdul Rahman Ahmad Nizha
Sport: Football. Born: 27.03.1999
14. Abdulla Mohammed Al-Romaihi
Sport: Gymnastics. Born: 16.12.1999
15. Ali Salem Al-Marri
Sport: Football. Born: 28.01.1999
16. Mubarak Bader Alabdulla
Sport: Football Referee. Born: 31.10.1999
17. Obidur Rahman Nawbab
Sport: Football. Born: 08.12.1998
18. Abdulaziz Hazaa Al Hasia
Sport: Football. Born: 31.08.1999
19. Abdulla Hassen Al-Rubei
Sport: Athletics. Born: 03.07.1999



20. Ali Turki A Owaida
Sport: Fencing. Born: 07.01.2000
21. Khalid Rashid Al Mudahka
Sport: Athletics. Born: 27.07.1999
22. Abdollah Ali Saei
Sport: Football. Born: 17.03.1999
23. Youssef Ayman Farahat
Sport: Football. Born: 21.03.1999
24. Homam Elamin Ahmed
Sport: Football. Born: 25.08.1999
25. Nasser Abdulsalam Al-Ahrak
Sport: Football. Born: 25.01.1999
26. Ahmad Albakheet Al Minhali
Sport: Football. Born: 05.05.1999
27. Mohammed Khaled Al Naimi
Sport: Football. Born: 25.03.2000
28. Abdalla Mubarak Abdulkadir
Sport: Athletics. Born: 16.03.1999
29. Abdulla Nasser Al-Murisi
Sport: Football. Born: 24.08.1999
30. Abdulla Nabil Al-Shaiba
Sport: Athletics. Born: 07.07.1999
31. Yusef Yaqoub Al-Sharshani
Sport: Football Referee. Born: 05.07.1999
32. Abduljaleel Ahmed Al-Mannai
Sport: Athletics. Born: 06.05.1999
33. Mohammed Yusuf Saqer
Sport: Athletics. Born: 26.10.1998
34. Shehab Mamdouh Ellethy
Sport: Football. Born: 18.04.2000
35. Saif Abdulla Basahl
Sport: Fencing. Born: 04.10.1999
36. Muhand Khamis Saifeldin
Sport: Athletics. Born: 13.01.1999
37. Fahed Mohammed Al Qesaimi
Sport: Football. Born: 18.09.1999
38. Ali Malolah Karami
Sport: Football. Born: 26.02.1999

WHAT MAKES YOU A CHAMPION?



AFTER GRADUATING SCHOOL MANY TALENTED YOUNG ATHLETES FACE A DECISION THAT MIGHT SHAPE THE REST OF THEIR LIVES – PURSUING THEIR EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY OR ENTIRELY FOCUS ON THEIR SPORTING CAREERS. IN ORDER TO SHOW STUDENT-ATHLETES POSSIBLE PATHS, ASPIRE ACADEMY'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM INVITED THREE PILLARS OF QATAR'S SPORTS COMMUNITY IN DECEMBER 2016. IN A PANEL DISCUSSION MODERATED BY LIFE SKILLS COACH ABDULAZIZ DALLOUL, RETIRED BASKETBALL PLAYER WITH AL-RAYYAN AND QATAR'S NATIONAL TEAM **YASSEEN ISMAIL** (36), BEIN SPORTS PRESENTER AND FORMER PROFESSIONAL QATARI TENNIS PLAYER **MOHAMMED AL-KUWARI** (33), AND QATAR'S NUMBER 1 TRACK-AND-FIELD ATHLETE AND ASPIRE GRADUATE **MUTAZ ESSA BARSHIM** (25) SPOKE ABOUT THE DEFINING MOMENTS IN THEIR LIVES.

What has been the most difficult decision in your life?

Yasseen Ismail: During my 23-year-long career as basketball player I faced many difficult decisions. One of the biggest ones was when I was still young. At the age of 18 I had to choose between joining a club outside of Qatar or playing four years in an US-American college before making a possible move towards playing in the NBA. I was a very talented attacker and many scouts and agents were interested in me. But in the end I decided to stay in Qatar and play for Al-Rayyan. Back then I was very much left alone with my decision and I could have used somebody to advise and guide me. You guys at the Academy definitely have a big advantage to be in such a professional environment where your teachers and coaches support you in the best possible way.

Mutaz Essa Barshim: For me it was definitely the hardest decision to choose whether to focus on my career as an athlete or to pursue my academic career after I graduated from Aspire. It took me three months to decide, and I chose sports and to focus on education later on. But both things are as important and this is a very personal position and the more advise you get the better.

Mohammed Al-Kuwari: For me it was quite similar. I also decided to turn pro after finishing secondary school at 18 and went for a year to France where I could train five hours a day. Making the decision to stop my professional sports career one year later to go to university was, of course, a very tough one, but I felt it was the right move for me. And a university degree is definitely a big benefit for every athlete, because education is important and will be very helpful after retiring from your sports career.

How important is it to be patient as an athlete? Many young talents are eager to be at the top as fast as possible, but is that a realistic goal?

Yasseen Ismail: No, because as an athlete you can still develop at a later stage. Just look at Mo Farah – he trained 15 years before he won his first Olympic gold in London in 2012 at the age of 29.

Mutaz Essa Barshim: How you measure your achievements is a very personal thing, because everyone develops differently. Patience and perseverance on and off the field are absolutely crucial. It took me a while to realize that, but at one point I knew that I need to be disciplined if I want to be successful.

Mohammed Al-Kuwari: I think to some extent it's normal for athletes to be impatient, because if you are in competitive sports you have a winning mentality no matter what you do. The most important thing is that you give a hundred percent at all times, so you don't have to regret missing an opportunity when you retire. And you should make sports your lifestyle, no matter if you are competing or not.

Is there a lot of jealousy among athletes and is this positive or negative?

Yasseen Ismail: Jealousy is an instinct in each person. In basketball some first team players might envy other players and they want to be better than them. And it's perfectly okay in team sports if individual players want to improve and further develop themselves as long as they don't act in a selfish way. The collective goal of the team has to come before the individual goals of the single players.

Mutaz Essa Barshim: I see jealousy as something positive, because among athletes it's normal that you want to be better than other competitors.

Mohammed Al-Kuwari: In the end it's about giving your personal best and if you have put in a lot of effort you will get the result that you deserve.

If you were 15 years old again – like some of the student-athletes in the audience – is there anything you would do different now?

Yasseen Ismail: Well, I would make use of all the opportunities that are now available in Qatar, because back when I was that young that was not possible and I had to go abroad to train. But in the meantime the standing of sport in the country has improved a lot and young athletes have excellent opportunities such as Aspire Academy to develop their skills.

Mutaz Essa Barshim: Be more focused, because I lacked focus when I was 15, I only listened to my teachers and coaches, but I did not do what they wanted me to do. I was not serious until I met Hicham El Guerrouj when he visited Aspire Academy. Talking with him changed my attitude and I started to do everything possible to become a professional athlete.

Mohammed Al-Kuwari: If I would be 15 again I would probably decide to turn pro immediately, because then I

would have become even better. I would also tell myself to not to look at injuries as setbacks, but as incentives to improve yourself.

Does being a professional athlete leave any time for hobbies?

Yasseen Ismail: Basketball has been my life for over 20 years, also in my free time, because I also used to watch games on TV or played basketball with my children at a later point in my life. Besides basketball I enjoy watching Spanish football – I am a huge fan of FC Barcelona.

Mutaz Essa Barshim: If you focus on sports there is not much time left for hobbies. But when I get the chance I try to read books about sports champions to learn from their experience. Mohamed Ali is a big inspiration for me.

Mohammed Al-Kuwari: I used to play football on a daily basis besides tennis. But I also think that sports persons should be overall educated and be able to have an opinion on everything.

Last question – As far as you are concerned, what are the characteristics of a real champion?

Yasseen Ismail: Hard work. And being aware that it's not about the number of hours you spend for training, but about the way you train. You have to be smart, focus properly on physical and mental aspects and be willing to make sacrifices. Because the road to become a champion is not full of roses, you have to be disciplined about eating, sleeping etc. It's about the small things, because they distinguish athletes from each other and make the difference. My advice for all of you is that you need to set yourself high level objectives and then do everything you can to reach them.

Mutaz Essa Barshim: Being a champion is not about the number of medals at home. Inside each one of you is a champion. But there is not only one way to get there – everyone has find his own way to become a champion.

Mohammed Al-Kuwari: The most important aspect of being a champion is having a strong personality. Mutaz is a good example for it. In order to reach this high level you have to face challenges and overcome obstacles. That's what being a champion is about.



YOUNG BOLD WHISTLE BLOWERS

The beautiful game of football is a magnet that draws players, fans, coaches and pundits in an indulgency loved by many worldwide but without referees the game is a damp quib. Love or hate them, criticise or compliment, agree or disagree with their decisions, but the referees cannot be ignored and with an ever increasing number of matches played by Aspire Academy teams a proportional number of referees are needed. Que in an ingenious project initiated by Referees Committee at Qatar Football Association to nurture develop and ultimately increase number of elite licensed referees in the country.

Led by Neji Jouini, Executive Director of the Referees Committee at QFA, a program to enroll students at Aspire Academy specializing in refereeing as their core sport was started in 2015. Six teenage refereeing cadets pioneered the program under the guidance of Adel Saleh from the Football Administration Department at Aspire Academy. Like Neji Jouini, Adel Saleh is a former elite referee and both men were on FIFA referees panel at the peak of their careers. When other students break classes to train for their specific sports, the student referees are out on pitch 8 at Aspire Academy doing physical training with instructors from the QFA Referees Committee. On Mondays and Wednesday the student referees meet in classroom again with the QFA Referees Committee staff to go through theory work and on some occasions, viewing and reviewing video analysis.

Talking about catching them when they are still young, that is exactly what the Aspire Academy student refereeing development program aims to do and last year in 2016 the second batch of six student referees enrolled to bring the number to a dozen teenage referees on their way to a professional careers.

According to Adel Saleh when the proposal from QFA Referees Committee to run this program was first mooted, not many were convinced nor could they see how it would work, "All credit to the vision of Neji Jouini and his team at QFA Referees Committee for their persistence the program is well underway now and these student referees are already officiating in the Qatargas League (2nd Division) as well as in the junior leagues."

"The program gets excellent support on this matter from QFA and Aspire Academy with both already reaping some benefits from the program. The Aspire Academy Tri-Series competition is the latest stage where one can see the student refs plying their trade with aplomb. We don't look at playing the sport only, we are proudly providing our own developing referees and suddenly the merits of this program are slowly winning more admirers on all fronts," added Adel Saleh.

"STUDENT REFEREES ARE ALREADY OFFICIATING IN THE QATARGAS AND JUNIOR LEAGUES"



"Our student referees have officiated abroad along senior Qatari referees in an exchange program we run with the Royal Belgium Football Association. The boys have done really well and it has been an interesting journey developing these new referees at such a young age between 15 and 17 years and when you consider that it's from age 25 that a referee is eligible to be on FIFA panel, these boys have an excellent early start and the future looks bright for elite licensed referees from Qatar," concluded Saleh.

Once Neji Jouini and his team at the QFA Referees Committee had sold their idea to the authorities at Aspire Academy to start the student referees program, some teenage refereeing enthusiasts were recruitment and included in a selected group of the national referees' development program. Around 40 students were part of a training camp for Qatari referees that went to Belgium in August 2015. The recruits were introduced to the foundation and basics

of refereeing with both practical and theoretic aspects covered.

Upon they return to Qatar the number of students on the course was whittled down and six were selected to start the program at Aspire Academy. These were keen to take the next stage of advanced refereeing. Once at Aspire the work intensified and not long after that the learning involved the students working in teams of three. Intensive practical work and written exams kicked in and training picked up a few notches.



The students work out include physical tests with sprinting, mobilisation exercises, action and acceleration and these are conducted at the Academy by QFA refereeing instructors three times a week. Also in the week back in the class room students go through course work that includes learning via video clips showing refereeing positions on the field of play, assistant referee movements and position in different situations.

After the first three months on the course where the student referees understudied seniors compatriots from the Qatar Football Association they were ready for their first duty officiating. A group was sent to Belgium to officiate in lower amateur leagues and the U-19 league with all of them taking turns in being referee and assistant referee. "They tell us only later on in the course will they ask and recommend us to specialise in our roles," says Ali. "This helps a lot in getting us to develop a closely working team of three and work together as a team is vital for refereeing, because we know each other's strength", adds Mubarak.

Another foreign assignment in France working with local referees put more kilometers on the student refs' clock. By the time the New Year 2016 arrived the young referees were considered ready to be thrown into the fray with matches in the Qatargas League as well as the U-17 and U-19 club matches over the weekends. "It's a hectic schedule of hard training and studying. There is studying and homework on two fronts, the academic work and the refereeing theory work and comes with homework and assignments during the week and then come weekend its officiating away at league matches. We get back to Aspire tired but the satisfaction that comes from the compliments and gratitude we receive from senior referees and also from players who realise that we are student referees," says 16-year-old Nasser.

The students get paid for officiating at the weekends, but Youssef is quick to point out, "It not a lot of money, more like pocket money really, but we are not into refereeing for money but the love of it."

For years the generally view of referees was that they were largely made up of those kids whose football talent and ability was nothing to write home who instead opted to remain in the game by picking up the whistle. The Aspire Academy student referees don't quite fit that mold though because to these students each one of them craved a pivotal role in a game for which they share a keen passion. "The ability to ensure that impartial competition is achieved through fair officiating made refereeing attractive to me," says Salem.



Aspire Academy student Referees: Majed Sultan Al-Mesalam, Nasser Ali Al- Khelaifi, Salem Atiq Alabdulla, Mubarak Bader Al- Abdulla, Ali Faisal Alhaddad, Youssef Yaqoub Al- Sharshani, Abdulaziz Badr Alnahdi, Saoud Ibrahim Al- Qassimi, Asil Faraj Al- Seari, Fahad Abdulaziz Al -Maadeed, Mohammed Yousuf Hussain.

WHY BECOME A REFEREE

Why do they do it?

Each of the student referees say they enjoy playing a pivotal role in the development and growth of the game in Qatar and choose football because they share an inordinate passion in the sport.

Maged says that he gains satisfaction from being involved in and ensuring the game is played in the right way. "Refereeing is a lot to do with control, seen and unseen and the sense of administering justice like a judge of court appeals to me," adds 17-year-old Salem.

The student referees played a pivotal role in the Aspire Academy Tri-Series tournament which is played over the whole academic year. Ali and Youssef talk enthusiastically about refereeing in it which is for them a "safe haven," by which the student referees learn in this environment almost assured of a minimum of abuse from these young players. Officiating in U-16 to U-18 games, often brings with it different challenges once players recognise the officials are their own age, "You simply let everyone know you are in charge and nothing untoward will pass so long as you are the man in the middle who is out to do a competent job and need to be respected for it", says Mubarak.

Of course there are times when troubles flare and the referee has to take appropriate action, diffusing situations with body language and targeted man management. Ali, Youssef and Maged say they have sent off players in matches before. "The cards are part of the game and if a situation arises where a caution is required I don't hesitate to use them accordingly", says Youssef.

Back at Aspire Academy time for review is an equally important part of the program. The students meet with amongst others, Khamis Al Kuwari, Hassan Rashid and Athanase Nkubito - adults mentors on this program - helping students' breakdown, assess and analyse their performances during the Tri-Series games and other matches.

"It's a good platform to elaborate on the rules, suggesting methods to successfully interpret and apply them in games that feature talented youth team players concerned less with cajoling the referee into making particular decisions and more with the pitting their style against different opponents from another continent. The Tri-Series in particular gives the student referees an international dimension and is a good opportunity to learn how to handle foreign players- which is all part of these students preparation to be international elite referees", says Nkubito from the QFA Referees Committee.

The development and progress of all referees is vitally important, but Aspire Academy and the Qatar Football Association have provided a clear pathway for all youngsters keen to be referees by initiating this program which is especially interested in those who are starting their refereeing careers at a young age. With these young active, committed referees who show the potential for progress that potential needs focus, commitment and hard work - all of which if started early bodes well for refereeing in the country.



ESTABLISHING VALUES DRIVES SUCCESS

ASPIRE ZONE FOUNDATION (AZF) HOSTED ITS BI-ANNUAL 'ASPIRE FOR EDUCATION' CONFERENCE ON MARCH 13 AND 14 AT THE TORCH BALLROOM WITHIN THE ASPIRE ZONE IN DOHA, WITH AZF'S CEO MR. MOHAMMAD KHALIFA AL-SUWAIDI AND A HOST OF OTHER SENIOR ASPIRE DIGNITARIES ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE'S INAUGURATION AND OPENING DAY. THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE, WHICH IS IN ITS THIRD YEAR, WAS HELD UNDER THE THEME 'OUR VALUES, OUR PRIDE'.

The conference was inaugurated by Mr. Badr Al Hay, Director of Education and Student Affairs at Aspire Academy, who welcomed local and regional education and leadership experts and senior officials from Aspire Zone Foundation to the opening day. The senior AZF delegation was led by Mr. Al-Suwaidi and included Mr. Abdulaziz Abdullah Al-Mahmoud, Deputy President for Sports Projects at Aspire Zone, Mr. Ivan Bravo, Director General of Aspire Academy, Mr. Ali Salem Afifa, Deputy Director General of Aspire Academy, among other senior officials from Aspire Academy.

Mr. Badr Al-Hay, said as part of his welcoming remarks on the first day of the conference: "Since its establishment in 2004, Aspire Academy has been on a journey that has been developing students holistically, providing individuals with a comprehensive academic, social and sporting education. This conference brings together education and leadership experts from a variety of backgrounds and expertise to ensure knowledge can be exchanged across the industry. We hope the conversations, debates and workshops taking place today and tomorrow help with the adoption and implementation of ethical values in the educational curriculum which will in turn help produce a well-rounded society."

The conference featured renowned local and regional experts discussing their research, participating in panel discussions and conducting workshops. Talks covered topics such as 'Strategies for value-based education and methods for integrating them in curricula', which was presented by Dr. Salih Aldegla, supervisor of the National Transformation Programme 2020 and the KSA Vision 2030; 'Neuroscience research findings in developing leadership values'; presented by Dr. Jamil Al Babli; Head of the academic support programme at Aspire Academy; 'The use of media to promote positive societal values', presented by Dr. Zouhair Mzidi, Founder and Director of Arabs' Media Consultation and Marketing; 'Introduction into AL-Arqam Academy's value system', presented by Ms. Ahlam Othman, Head of the Values and Life Skills Department for AL Arqam Girls Academy; and 'The development process of life skills from theory to practice', presented by Mr. Shawkat Al-Talafha, Director General of 'Rowad Al Ghad' Education Centre.





SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT IN 2004, ASPIRE ACADEMY HAS BEEN ON A JOURNEY THAT HAS BEEN DEVELOPING STUDENTS HOLISTICALLY, PROVIDING INDIVIDUALS WITH A COMPREHENSIVE ACADEMIC, SOCIAL AND SPORTING EDUCATION.

Dr. Saleh Al Dagla, Consultant in Development and Values and supervisor of the National Transformation Programme 2020 and KSA Vision 2030 at the Ministry of Islamic Affairs in Saudi Arabia, praised Aspire Academy's decision to hold the conference, saying: "I'm very thrilled to be part of this conference and I commend Aspire Academy for its impressive organisation of this event. They have gathered the best local and regional expertise in one place, enabling collaboration and discussion around vital topics that will benefit all of us and, more importantly, education as a whole."

Meanwhile, Dr. Zuhair Al-Mzidi, Founder and Director of Arabs' Media Consultation and Marketing, added: "Aspire Academy is known as a leader in sporting education but this conference, which focused on the less well-known, educational aspect of the Academy's role in developing students, has set a positive example for all local and regional educators. We hope to see others embark on the same journey to excellence by holding innovative conferences like this one."

Attendees also benefited from comprehensive workshop sessions delivered by Aspire Academy's experts, which provided them with useful insights into issues such how to ensure children are raised to develop a good understanding of Islamic culture, how to develop students' talents so they can be used for the benefit of society, and encouraging students to be just and respectful towards other people, irrespective of their religious and ethnic backgrounds.



ASPIRE ACADEMY LENDS AN EXPERT HAND TO INDIAN FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT



ASPIRE ACADEMY AND LEADING INDIAN SUPER LEAGUE (ISL) FOOTBALL CLUB, DELHI DYNAMOS FC, SIGNED A GROUNDBREAKING TECHNICAL PARTNERSHIP IN JUNE 2017 THAT WILL SEE THE ACADEMY SHARE ITS FOOTBALL KNOWHOW AND MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE INCLUDING COACHING, TRAINING, SCOUTING AND SPORTS SCIENCE WITH THE DELHI-BASED CLUB IN THEIR PURSUIT OF SUCCESS ON THE PITCH.

As part of the agreement, Aspire Academy sends coaches, talent scouts and analysts to Delhi, India, to help develop existing talent and promote best practice in training, development and scouting for the club's teams and different youth development programmes, including the already well established Delhi Dynamos FC Soccer Schools, Development Centre and Residential Academy. Eligible youth is allowed to take part in the 'Aspire Residential Programme', which gives young Indian players the chance to train and learn at Aspire Academy in Doha having the opportunity to train at the same facilities as top international football clubs, including Real Madrid, FC Barcelona and FC Bayern Munich, accelerating their development and that of Indian football.

"The Indian Super League is one of the most dynamic and exciting new leagues in the world and we're thrilled to be entering into this agreement with one of the country's most successful clubs. This marks an important milestone for Delhi Dynamos FC and Aspire Academy. Our two organisations share many of the same values and ambitions, and together we will lay the first foundations of what we hope will become a long-standing partnership in football development between Qatar and India", says Aspire Academy Director General Ivan Bravo.

Dr. Anil Sharma, owner of Delhi Dynamos FC, is also very excited about the partnership: "India and Qatar are two countries with close ties and it is only natural that there is a partnership between two organisations based in their respective capital cities. I am happy and excited to see Delhi Dynamos FC partner with a prestigious organisation in order to help grow football not only in Delhi, but in Northern India as well. The Indian Super League has great potential and Aspire Academy's involvement will help to cement Delhi Dynamos FC's reputation as one of the most exciting clubs in Indian football. Both organisations have lofty expectations and we will work hard to provide global opportunities for young Indian players and make football the number one sport in Northern India."

The partnership also sees Aspire Academy and Delhi Dynamos FC work together to shape the club's football structure to optimise operations and build a domestic and global football network for the Capital City's only football franchise. As part of this, the two organisations will implement a knowledge transfer system, giving Delhi Dynamos FC access to the Academy's football methodologies, planning and data analytics capabilities. Thereby, both organisations hope the partnership will produce a leading number of players for India's national teams in the very near future.



NEW COACH APPOINTED

In an early sign of the impact and benefit created by this partnership, Aspire Academy played a crucial role in the search for the club's new head coach, Miguel Angel Portugal. The ex-Real Madrid midfielder, who has managed teams in Spain or Algeria, assumes responsibility for managing the club from Italian Legend Gianluca Zambrotta under whom Delhi Dynamos FC managed to make it to the semi-final last season.

"We are very excited to welcome Miguel Angel Portugal as the head coach of our club. As our technical partner, Aspire Academy played a critical role in helping us pinpoint Miguel as the right fit for the club – an individual who is highly regarded on account of his understanding of the game, both as a player and also as coach. His success during his career with Real Madrid as both a player and coach is clear proof of his quality and his knowledge of the game. This is a new season for the Delhi Dynamos FC with a new team and it was extremely critical for us to have someone like Miguel at the helm," said Mr. Rohan Sharma, Director, Delhi Dynamos FC.

Commenting on Portugal's appointment, Ivan Bravo said: "This news is evidence of our commitment to help Delhi Dynamos fulfil its true potential and truly make its mark on Indian football. I have known Miguel for a very long time. He is an excellent coach and credit to the game, and I'm convinced he will have a real impact on the club. I'm delighted with how quickly and effectively we are implementing the groundbreaking technical partnership that we signed just a few weeks ago and looking forward to future success."

ABOUT THE INDIAN SUPER LEAGUE

The ISL was founded in 2013 and has become one of the fastest-growing professional football leagues in the world, with an average match attendance of more than 26,000 (2015 season average), the third-highest of any domestic professional league in the world - behind only the Bundesliga and the Premier League - and the highest in Asia. Since its inaugural season, the ISL and Delhi Dynamos FC in particular have attracted some of the biggest names in world football, including Alessandro Del Piero, who was the global league ambassador, Florent Malouda, Roberto Carlos and John Arne Riise, to name a few.

ABOUT DELHI DYNAMOS F.C.

Delhi Dynamos F.C (DDFC), founded in 2014, is the club of the capital city of India that plays in the Indian Super League (ISL). As the only ISL club in Northern India, Delhi Dynamos FC has a catchment area of over 300 million people and is proud to have fan favourites Marcelinho, Golden Boot winner last season, and Florent Malouda, Hero of the League, as part of the team. It is also one of the more consistent teams in the ISL, having qualified for the league Semi-Finals in both of the last two seasons. It also won the Fair Play Award in the ISL's first season.

SUMMIT OF SHARED KNOWLEDGE

AFTER PARIS IN 2014 AND BERLIN IN 2015, THE 2016 "ASPIRE ACADEMY GLOBAL SUMMIT" ON "FOOTBALL PERFORMANCE & SCIENCE" TOOK PLACE IN THE DUTCH CITY OF AMSTERDAM. DYNAMIC, MODERN AND SYNONYMOUS WITH INNOVATION – THE CITY PERFECTLY REFLECTED THE SPIRIT OF THE "ASPIRE IN THE WORLD FELLOWS" COMMUNITY WHICH BROUGHT TOGETHER YOUTH FOOTBALL EXPERTS FROM WORLD-LEADING FOOTBALL CLUBS AND FEDERATIONS AT AMSTERDAM ARENA.

Since its launch in 2014 in Paris, the "Aspire in the World Fellows" community has developed at a rapid pace. Participants regularly communicated with one another through an online platform, and they met at the "Fellows Gatherings" in Doha or at summits in Europe to push their ideas forward. Topics covered important issues such as "Training Load", "Mental Enhancement", "Training Plan Strategies" and "Integrated Training Methodology." The outcome of all this hard work and the efforts made by Aspire Academy, the clubs and federations was the development of a powerful platform comprising an extraordinary collection of knowledge.

THE FELLOWS' EXTENDED COMMUNITY

It has always been a major goal of Aspire Academy to not only create a community like this, but to further develop football in general. Such an objective can only be achieved if the outcome and findings of the group of 50 are also shared with sport scientists and coaches from football clubs all over the world. Therefore a new concept was introduced in 2016 called "The Fellows' Extended Community". This approach gave each member of the Fellows the opportunity to issue "wild cards" to affiliate clubs that were then welcomed at this year's summit in Amsterdam. They had the chance to attend presentations and even lectures specifically tailored for them. After the event they also received access to selected areas of the Fellows' online platform to be able to put the know-how into practice.

The introduction of "The Fellows' Extended Community" was not the only innovation at this year's summit. For the first time, there were "Master Classes" taught by a world

renowned experts such as Argentinian star manager Marcelo Bielsa, who coached Argentina's football national team to victory at the 2004 Olympics and also successfully managed Chile's national team as well as clubs like Athletic Bilbao. He conducted one "Master Class" each day on training methodology.

TOP NOTCH SPEAKERS

As in previous years, a key objective was to further develop the community in a number of areas of their choosing within the "Fellows' Training". The focus in 2016 was on "Developing a high-performance culture" and two speakers who have established themselves as the foremost experts in the field were invited. The two leading figures were world-class volleyball coach Julio Velasco, who is currently in charge of Argentina's volleyball national team; and Professor Dave Collins, Chair and Director of the Institute of Coaching and Performance at the School of Sport and Wellbeing at the University of Central Lancashire.

In addition to sessions focused on three of the major topics covered at the summit – "From Data to Training", "Return to Play" and "Feedback and Communication with Players, Coaches and Staff" – several high-profile "Star Chats" also made up a key part of the schedule. These gave participants the chance to examine different topics from a variety of perspectives. Again, they featured some of the world's best footballing coaches or football stars. This year's list of popular figures from the world of football who took part included Andres Villas-Boas, Xavi Hernandez, Carles Puyol, Edwin van der Sar, Ronald de Boer and Marc Overmars.





THE COMMUNITY IS GROWING

PROFESSOR VALTER DI SALVO, DIRECTOR OF FOOTBALL PERFORMANCE & SCIENCE AT ASPIRE ACADEMY AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE "ASPIRE ACADEMY GLOBAL SUMMIT" LOOKS BACK ON THE 2016 EDITION AND TALKS ABOUT...

...the unique location: We carefully chose the venue – the Amsterdam ArenA – as a space that brought us closer to the football pitch both physically but also symbolically. Focusing our efforts and attention on practical applications of performance research and theory is one of our main objectives for the future. Applying the outcome of our projects, discussions and findings is the most important step in our collaborative work and the reason we started this community in the first place. Only if we each support one another and share our knowledge and expertise will the effort that each one of us invests – whether in these Summits and gatherings or our online platform – lead to further improvements in the performance of young players.

...the growth of the community:

We don't want to limit the incredibly valuable knowledge and insight that exists within this group to just the 50 members of the Fellows programme. Embarking on an initiative like this provides an incredible opportunity to give back to the community. We have, therefore, decided to open up the programme in 2016 by establishing the "Fellows Extended Community" – a door opener for smaller (and in some cases larger) clubs that are associated with existing members to share and benefit from the community's collective knowledge, thereby becoming part of this unique project. The result of this approach means that last year we welcomed an additional 49 clubs to Amsterdam. We're optimistic that expanding the number of participants will magnify the impact of the Aspire in the World Fellows' work on performance levels within youth football.

...next steps:

The future focus of the programme is going to be more geared towards practical applications of best practice and the latest research. Establishing a research committee will also help in achieving this goal in multiple ways. First, it encourages clubs to submit research projects, of which the best chosen by the committee will be presented at the 2017 Global Summit. Further, it creates the opportunity for clubs to collaborate on joint research projects. This approach makes it possible for clubs to share research data and review the performance levels of players from different countries and continents.

"A BIG OPPORTUNITY"

THE 2016 EDITION OF ASPIRE ACADEMY'S GLOBAL SUMMIT UNITED SOME OF THE WORLD'S BEST FOOTBALL PERFORMANCE EXPERTS IN AMSTERDAM. CHAMP ASKED THEM WHAT THEY LIKED BEST ABOUT THE EVENT.

"It's spectacular having the most important clubs in the world at one place and exchanging experiences. The topics are perfectly chosen, the workshops are very interesting and you can always learn something at events like this."

Joan Ramon Tarrago, FC Barcelona, Head of Performance Department

"It has a number of advantages to be here at this summit. It's a very exciting process working together like this and to try to use the knowhow from the fellows in our own setting."

Patrick Eibenberger, FC Red Bull Salzburg, Sport Scientist

"The presentation "From Data to Training" was truly inspirational and this exchange of ideas between clubs is great for getting new inputs that the participants can try to implement into their daily practice."

Jan Verbeek, Royal Netherlands Football Association, Researcher at Technical Football Department

"Having a relationship with clubs from all over the world is a huge benefit, because we can learn about different philosophies and strategies. The summit is the highlight of each year, the work the clubs are putting into the online platform over the year is also remarkable and the information that is collected has a high quality from which we can all benefit."

Juan Sebastian Veron, Estudiantes de la Plata, President



"Coming from a different sport code in my case Australian Rules Football, this summit has given me a different perspective to how data managements and analysis can be used to increase performance. The Academy culture is not something we have in Aussie Rules Football and coming here has made me realise the merits of such a system."

Stuart Robert Graham, Port Adelaide Football Club, Head of Sports Science

"It's good to have all these people in one place, and to gather knowledge from around the world. The model of this community is great and might get copied from other sports."

Richard Grootscholten, Feyenoord, Head of Academy



CHATTING WITH THE STARS AT THE GLOBAL SUMMIT



MARC OVERMARS
DIRECTOR OF FOOTBALL AT AFC AJAX

Marc, you trained at Ajax's academy yourself. How important is the work being done by these academies today?

I've been thinking about that a lot recently, because it's an important question for us all to consider – how to bring academy players into the first team. The fact is, it's very difficult for young players to break into a first team. At Ajax we want to have five or six players that we have developed ourselves in our first team. That's very difficult because every year we also have to try to win the league. Same as FC Barcelona. To get that balance – integrating young players into the first team whilst at the same time performing at the highest level – is not always easy. But I think we are doing well in this respect. And I think everybody recognises Ajax for developing young players to play at the next level. But we also know that presently, Dutch football is known for developing players that then go on to play for bigger clubs in Europe. When I left Ajax as a player I was 24. Now players leave at 21. This represents a big change for football in the Netherlands.

Louis Van Gaal led a young Ajax side to glory in 1995 when they won the UEFA Champions League. How important was he for the development of the young players?

He was very important for us, because he was a coach who gave young players like us opportunities. And he was not afraid to do so. You should not be afraid as a manager to put young players in the team. But you need the support from the board and the fans because if you lose three times in a row, then you have a problem. If all these people saw things the same way and understood the value and importance of such steps, then of course there would be a better chance of succeeding.

Do you think Ajax will ever be able again to produce a team that will succeed in the Champions League? Or does the financial power of the big European leagues make this impossible?

I think in the last five to ten years, a lot has changed in the game when it comes to money. The Netherlands cannot even compete with the second division in England when it comes to that. But I still believe that we can attain a certain level in Europe. Playing in the Champions League is not easy. But we have to be able to produce a team that is good enough to reach a semi-final or final of the Europa League.

Marc Overmars (born 29 March 1973) is a retired Dutch footballer who won the UEFA Champions League with AFC Ajax in 1995. The winger played also for FC Arsenal and FC Barcelona.



RONALD DE BOER
FORMER DUTCH FOOTBALL INTERNATIONAL

Ronald, you played in Qatar yourself. How important do you think Aspire Academy is for the development of football in this country?

I think it's very important, because people in Qatar are very passionate about football. They like to watch football – and not just the big teams in Europe – but those teams playing in Qatar. Developing anything successfully requires good organisation, and in terms of Qatar's football, Aspire Academy

is its foundation. The Academy provides youngsters with a good education as well as opportunities to learn from and work with excellent coaches and doctors. It basically provides everything that is needed nowadays. Of course, you have to be patient, because success does not come overnight.

Some young Qataris made the move to play in European leagues. How important is this in terms of developing Qatar's National Team for the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar™?

I think it's crucial. If you want to properly develop your players, then they have to play at the highest level and to compete with better players. If you never play against players that are really good – then you will never find yourself tested properly and you will never improve. That's the problem we also face in Holland. We have a fine league, but we don't compete at the very highest level anymore. And if you want to be the best you need players that play at the highest level. You need players at the biggest teams like Manchester United etc. They can make a difference. Just look at Belgium. They are one of the top teams in the FIFA ranking, but not a single one of their starting lineup plays in Belgium. That's why it's also important for Qatari players to get out there and fight to compete at this level. Not all of them will be able to do that, but that's the normal selection process.

You have spent time at big clubs like FC Barcelona and Ajax – two clubs famous for producing great footballers. Is it possible to compare the approach to youth development at these two clubs?

They are very similar, because at each the focus always starts with a player's mental agility. It's never about strength. The first thing they look for in young players is his intelligence on the ball. Crucially these academies are looking to judge if a young footballer plays with an idea or not. At Ajax and Barcelona they always look at what the potential players have and try to improve them where they need to. But they focus first on the mind, and to ascertain if you are a quick thinker on the pitch. Players like Xavi, Iniesta and Messi are great examples for that. I never saw Xavi in the gym. If you compare him to Cristiano Ronaldo, the first one is a natural, the other one makes his body a tool. And of course, that is also important. You can have a great career if you are exceptionally quick thinking on the ball like Xavi. Ronaldo on the other hand is so fast and physically strong and he has great scoring abilities. Both are great players, but they are very different. And if you look at the academies at clubs like Ajax and FC Barcelona, they look first and foremost for players that are quick thinkers.

Ronald deBoer (born 15 May 1970) is a retired Dutch midfielder, who successfully played for AFC Ajax, FC Barcelona and Rangers FC. A UEFA Champions League winner in 1995, he also played in Qatar for Al-Rayyan and Al-Shamal.



CARLES PUYOL
LONGTIME FORMER CAPTAIN AT FC BARCELONA

How important was that time in La Masia for the development of your career?

To be honest, I would have liked to have joined earlier than I did when I was already 15 years old. We did not have a team in the village where I was born, so I missed out on a lot of training opportunities that other boys my age had. When I arrived at Barcelona everybody was much better than me. They had a much better idea about tactics than I did. I had to work a lot and put a lot of effort into learning. The result being that the two years that I was at La Masia were incredibly important for me. I had a great time there. We were like a family and a group of friends with a lot of passion for football.

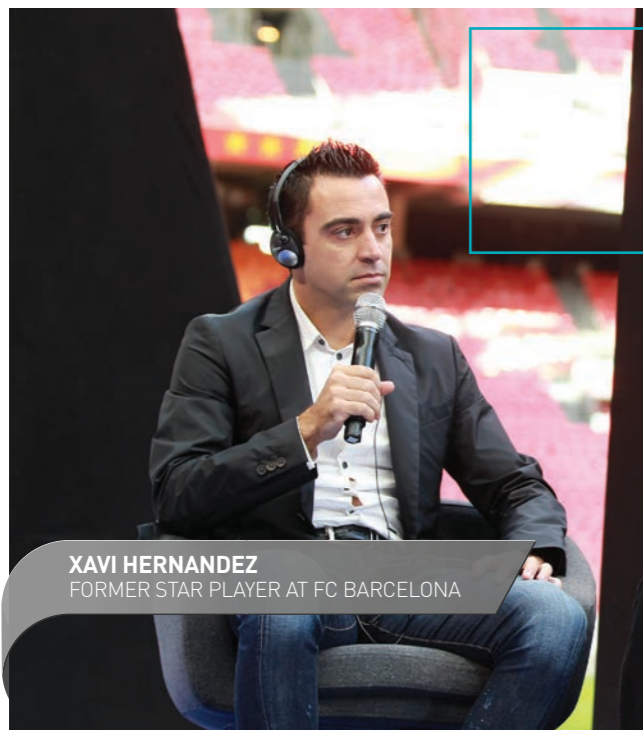
How important are conferences like this summit, during which clubs have the opportunity to share knowledge about developing young players?

Methodology is very important. At Barcelona the methodology is very clear from the beginning. Even when you make it into the first team, players are learning every day. When I was 30 I already had a number of awards, but I understood that I could still improve. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with Pep Guardiola whose goal was always to make us players better.

What are the biggest challenges today in developing players and integrating them into the first team?

Again, I think that the methodology is very important. Everyone has to work together to focus on this right the way from the beginning to the end like we did at Barcelona. If you do this, then you don't have a problem when players move from one team to the next – because everyone has the same understanding. Another crucially important factor is to have the best coaches working with young people, both to enable them to become good footballers but also to develop as good people.

Carles Puyol (born 13 April 1978) is a Spanish retired professional football player. He served as the longtime team captain for his only club Barcelona after taking over from Luis Enrique in August 2004. He appeared in 593 official games for the club and won 21 major titles, notably six La Liga titles and three Champions League trophies. A Spanish international who represented his country on 100 occasions, Puyol was part of the squad that won the Euro 2008 and the 2010 World Cup tournaments.



XAVI HERNANDEZ
FORMER STAR PLAYER AT FC BARCELONA

Xavi Hernández Creus (born 25 January 1980) is a Spanish professional footballer who plays as a central midfielder for Qatari club Al Sadd SC. A former star player for FC Barcelona, Xavi is also an advisor to Aspire Academy. He played an integral role in Spain's victory at the 2010 World Cup, as well as in the national team's successes at both Euro 2008 and Euro 2012.

A lot of keepers have to wait a long time for their big opportunity. How do you keep young goalkeepers motivated and how do you go about developing them?

As to the question of when do you give a young player a chance, it's a matter of quality. Simply put – you give a goalkeeper the chance when he is as good as or better than the older or the more experienced player. At AC Milan you see a goalkeeper at 16 or 17 making his debut and keeping his position. The same happened with Buffon at Parma or with Casillas in Madrid and Neuer in Schalke. When a goalkeeper is good enough, it shows. And when the opportunity comes you have to grab it and cherish it and work hard to keep the position. The unfortunate thing for a goalkeeper is that he just has one position where he can play.

Who do you think is the best goalkeeper in the world?

I think Manuel Neuer has a fantastic mentality, and the quality of his saves is superb. I was a goalkeeper who liked to play outside the box, use my feet and play the ball from right to left. But Neuer has taken it up a couple of levels by picking up balls 25 to 30 metres outside his own area. He is the goalkeeper that everyone looks at nowadays, including myself.

What has been the secret of the success of La Masia?

The secret is the philosophy of Johan Cruyff which continues to bear fruit to this day. The work that has been done there over the last 30 years has been very important. I am proud that I have been to La Masia. There is a very big difference between the FC Barcelona of today and the other clubs playing in La Liga when it comes to the idea of football.

You have been playing in Qatar since 2015. How have you experienced the passion for football that exists ahead of the 2022 FIFA World Cup? How does Aspire Academy contribute to the development of football in Qatar?

As proud as I am of FC Barcelona's academy, I'm also very proud of Aspire Academy. My family and I are enjoying being in Qatar. The country wants to do well in 2022 and they have a very professional environment. They are always working on becoming better. Aspire Academy plays an important part in that process. I think they are doing very well and I am happy to be part of the Aspire family.

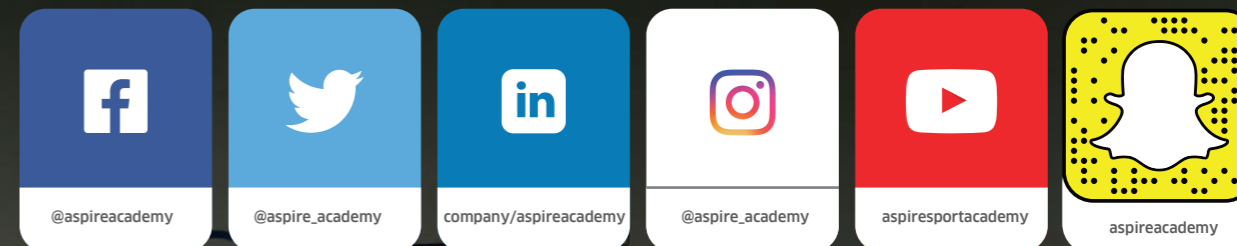
You played under Guardiola at FC Barcelona. How did his coaching methods improve you as a player?

Pep has made us all improve. He has a unique way of understanding football and he makes you understand how the game has to progress. He also changed our way of defending and going forward. He has a very specific way of understanding football. He changed the football that we played at Barcelona and in fact, I would describe him as the most influential figure in world football during the last 15 years besides Cruyff.

Edwin van der Sar (born 29 October 1970) is a former professional goalkeeper. During his career he has played for Ajax, Juventus, Fulham and Manchester United. He is the most capped player in the history of the Dutch national team.



EDWIN VAN DER SAR
GENERAL DIRECTOR, AFC AJAX



**CONNECT WITH US
AND FOLLOW
ASPIRE ACADEMY
ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

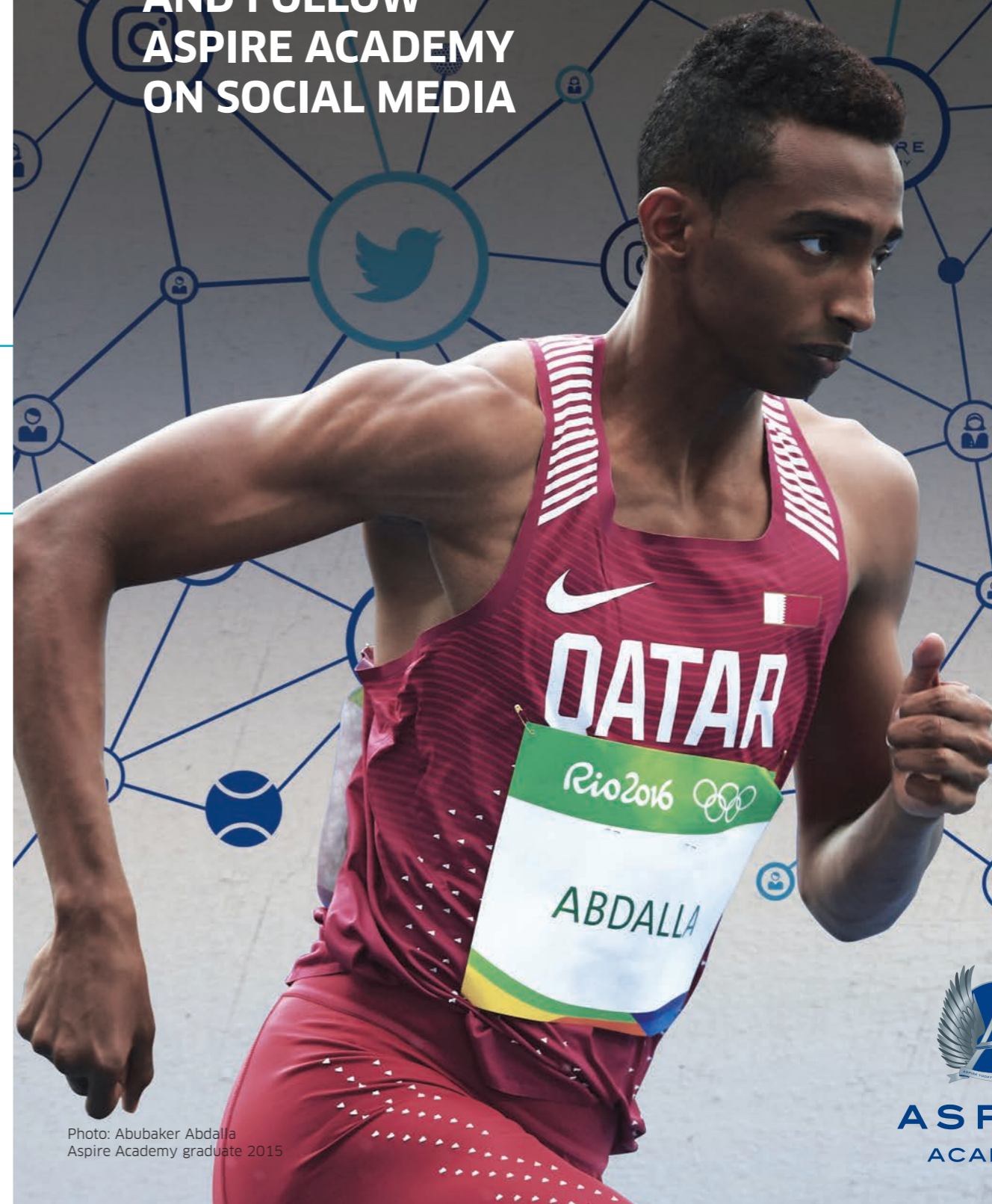


Photo: Abubaker Abdalla
Aspire Academy graduate 2015



“EVERY SINGLE INDIVIDUAL REQUIRES A DIFFERENT RESPONSE”

PORTUGUESE FOOTBALL COACH, **ANDRE VILLAS BOAS**, CURRENT MANAGER OF SHANGHAI SIPG AND FORMER MANAGER OF CHELSEA FC, FC PORTO AND ZENIT ST. PETERSBURG, SHARED WITH THE AUDIENCE OF THE ASPIRE ACADEMY GLOBAL SUMMIT IN AMSTERDAM SOME FASCINATING AND INTEREST EXPERIENCES FROM HIS COACHING CAREER.

You have been to Doha and Aspire Academy. What have you made of the methodology and technology that has been developed out there?

The thing that is extremely good about Aspire, is that the people there have a long-term vision. There is a set up for 2022 and to have so many people articulate the same vision is the key to be successful. If there is no vision no-one can influence the youth. I have been in touch with Aspire a lot and I value and appreciate their work and I know by working with so many different people coming from different backgrounds they are seeking to meet this vision. That can be done by working in same direction and with continuity for the good of Qatar's football and other sports.

How challenging is it for clubs these days to bring talents from the youth program to the first team?

I think there are two different perspectives here. There is the professional football and there is the formation of young players. There was a time, say 5 or 6 years ago, when the thinking was that the youth teams should play and be modeled along the senior team. It is unfortunate for the development of youth football that this is now finished, because the head coaches of first teams nowadays last a maximum of 2 or 3 years and in the formation of young players you cannot be subjected to these frequent changes at the top. You see for example at Bayern they went from Pep Guardiola to Carlo Ancelotti, at Manchester City we see they went from Pellegrini to Guardiola and with Chelsea from Ancelotti to myself. So the clubs don't know what they are looking for in terms of methodology or the coach. They go from opposite to opposite. So the development of young players has gone in a different direction and given the clubs' youth departments the freedom to run separately from senior team programs.

How do you translate the vision you see in Qatar into the English Premier League or the German Bundesliga about developing youth that will end up in first team? How much pressure is on this young players?

Well, I am not a particularly great example of a coach that has nurtured a lot of young talent. Largely because my career has been a case of 5 different clubs in 7 years, so I am not most suited to answer that. But I can tell you about my experience at the clubs I worked at. The Academy directors in all these clubs are no longer there. In Zenit the person in charge of youth when I was at the club is no longer there and it's the same at Porto, Chelsea, Tottenham and Academia.

So how would you like to see the development of youth at football clubs then?

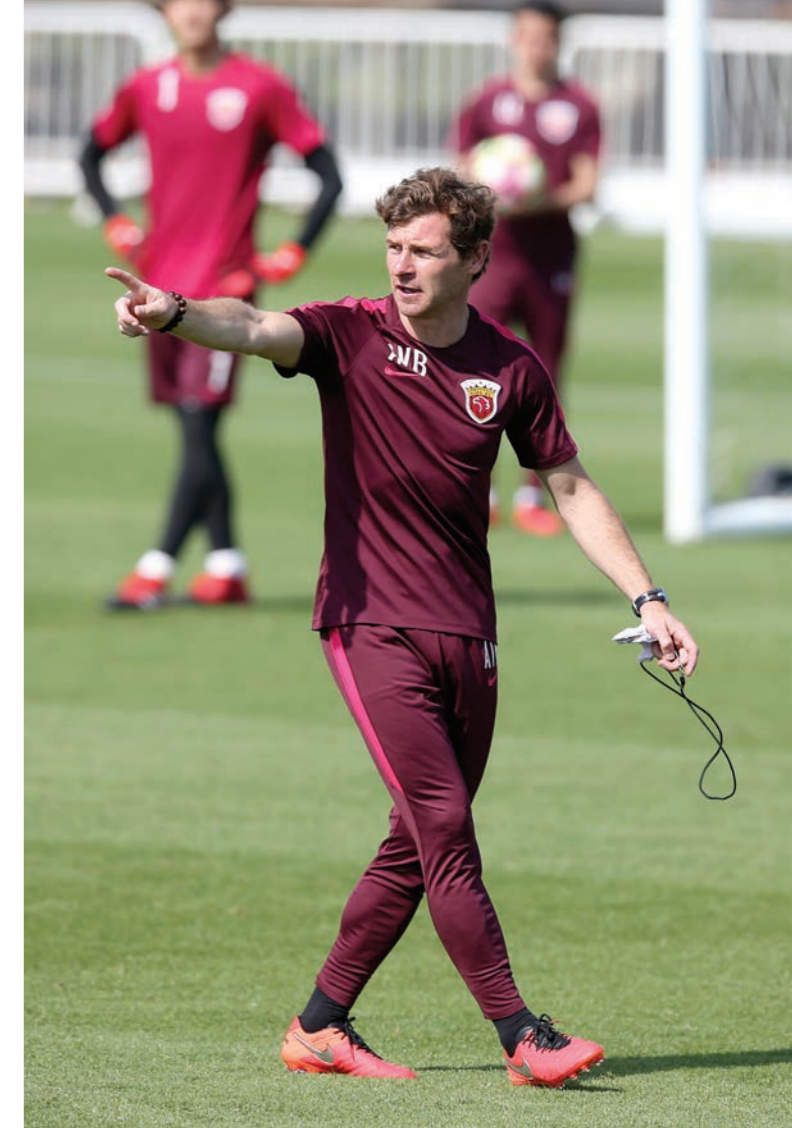
The youth philosophy in a club should be totally separated from the structure and direction of who is leading the first team. Because there is constant and regular change of manager for first at the top of the clubs, the Youth Academy work and formation should be miles away from first team. The culture of the club and country is where the essence of how to play comes through and this philosophy should ensure that young players come through their system and still fit in when they move to senior team. So in my opinion the clubs ought to let youth development run on its own and I don't think you can really say these days the methodology and philosophy of the first team coach filters through to the youth teams.

You started your coaching career very young. Did you feel that there were lots of high expectations on you very early?

No, I didn't feel like that, but I certainly believe now after seven years that probably the Chelsea experience was too much too soon. I wasn't flexible at that time, I was communicative with everybody, but not flexible in my principles this is the way I want and I would try till the end. And afterwards in Tottenham I learnt to be completely different and flexible. In football you have to live the daily basis, day to day is everything. The objective is the group, but every single individual requires a different response from a manager – you can't be the same person to each player. If you don't learn to be flexible to a certain degree you will end up making a lot of mistakes.

How much was fellow Portuguese manager, Jose Mourinho an influence to you?

I idolized Mourinho and really wanted to be like him. In my formative years working with Jose was the best time of my life – I was able to learn many things and working with him takes you to another level. You fall



in love with him and he becomes your idol. I wanted to be like him, know everything that he knew and absorb all the information he was giving. Then you fall on the wrong side of Jose and that's when things change and you realise that you've been blinded by someone. He has this fascinating capability of getting the best out of you, which has good or bad consequences for people. My consequences were that as a result of the argument or disagreement we had, I started my coaching career.





FOLLOWING A FANTASTIC RUN IN SPAIN'S DIVISION SEGUNDA B, GROUP 1 AND FINISHING THE REGULAR SEASON ON TOP - FOURTEEN POINTS AHEAD OF RUNNERS UP RACING SANTANDER - AND WINNING ALL GAMES IN THE PLAY-OFFS, ASPIRE-OWNED SPANISH FOOTBALL CLUB **CULTURAL Y DEPORTIVA LEONESA** WERE PROMOTED TO SPAIN'S SECOND DIVISION, THE LIGA 1|2|3. HEAD COACH **RUBÉN DE LA BARRERA** TOLD CHAMP ABOUT THE HISTORICAL 2016-17 SEASON THAT SECURED THE CLUB'S RETURN TO THE SECOND TIER, 43 YEARS SINCE THEIR LAST STINT IN THE 1974-75 SEASON.

Ruben, Cultural has had an impressive season, finishing top of Segunda Division B and securing promotion after winning all 6 games in the play-offs. What is the secret behind this perfect season?

There were several factors helping us achieve promotion but, in essence, the secret was the feeling of belonging we built in our team. This was a family with a common goal sharing a chance to seize an opportunity. All these factors helped us build a foundation on which to achieve the promotion we all wished for.

In the end, it all came down to two deciding games against Barcelona B. What made the difference in those play-off matches?

More than anything, we came to these play-off matches with an intense hunger that translated into competitive spirit. We had given our all in previous games, fighting until the end against Racing de Santander and Celta B, but the sense of victory we earned in those battles created an even greater desire to win that helped us against Barcelona B. We knew they would try to control us by keeping possession and controlling the pace of play, but we adjusted and fought off their attacks. As the game wore on and we stood strong, we grew into the match and gained confidence.

When you and Cultural were preparing for the second part of the season at Aspire Academy during the winter, you said that the most important thing for the team was to keep growing to achieve their goals. How satisfied are you with the development of the team since then? How much potential to improve remains?

I am very satisfied with the progress we have made as a group and our development as a team. From the evolution of our playing style to the improvement of individual players, we have continued to grow into a formidable opponent. However, I still think we can improve and we will have to adapt to all the pressures of the new season given the much improved standard of play needed to survive in this league.

Next year Leonesa is playing in Spain's Segunda Division B. What are your expectations for La Liga 1|2|3?

This is a tough league. It is very competitive and everyone we face will have strengths we must control. I hope we can build on the work we put in last season to make the most of this opportunity, and as newcomers to the division we have strengths that are unknown and others will struggle to handle too. With training and the continued sense of belief we have been building within the squad, I'm confident we will maintain our hunger, which will make other teams uncomfortable when they are playing against us. It will be tough but we have to face the future with optimism.

You have some Aspire Academy graduates in the squad. How have they developed this season and how important are they going to be for Cultural in future?

I am very happy to have these warriors on our roster. They are competitive players with talent and desire, which is exactly what I look for. They also recognise that this is a very important step for their sport careers because the level of competition is high - even greater than that which they found when they arrived in Leon. I hope this encourages them to continue growing, fighting and training hard. For now, this attitude and a dose of humility is all they need to do well.



In an official sponsorship signing ceremony held on June 7 at Aspire Academy, Nakheel Landscapes has entered a cooperation agreement to be the official sponsor and exclusive turf management partner of Spanish football club, Cultural y Deportiva Leonesa, owned by Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF).

The agreement was signed by Mr. Ivan Bravo, Vice President of Cultural y Deportiva Leonesa and Director General of Aspire Academy, and Mr. Ghassan Oueijan, Managing Director of Al Nakheel Agriculture & Trading Company. The ceremony was also attended by Mr. Mohammed Khalifa Al Suwaidi, CEO of AZF and Sheikh Fahad bin Mohammed Al Thani, Vice President of Al Nakheel Agriculture & Trading WLL.

Commenting on this landmark signing, Mohammad Khalifa Al-Suwaidi, CEO of Aspire Zone Foundation, said: "Having worked together with Nakheel Landscapes in the past three

years, we are certain of their capabilities. We're positive that this agreement is beneficiary for both of us. Aspire Zone Foundation is proud to support local organisations by utilising their expertise on a local and international level."

As part of the agreement, Nakheel Landscapes will provide financial support and expertise as a "Turf Enhancement Advisor" for six years, starting next season 2017/2018, to develop effective methods for maintaining the club's natural and artificial sport fields. Meanwhile, Cultural y Deportiva Leonesa will provide promotional services.

Speaking about the partnership, Sheikh. Fahad Mohammed Al Thani, Vice President of Nakheel Landscapes, said: "Nakheel Landscape is very proud to support the international sporting ambitions of Aspire Zone Foundation on a long-term basis through this sponsorship agreement."



ASPIRE ZONE FOUNDATION OWNED CLUB KAS EUPEN MADE ITS DEBUT IN BELGIUM'S TOP DIVISION, THE JUPILER PRO LEAGUE, IN THE 2016-17 SEASON FOLLOWING A THRILLING PROMOTION RACE IN THE 2015-16 SEASON.

DESPITE IT BEING THEIR FIRST SEASON IN THE TOP FLIGHT AND HAVING A RELATIVELY YOUNG AND INEXPERIENCED SQUAD, THE QATARI OWNED CLUB HELD THEIR OWN AGAINST SOME OF BELGIUM'S BIGGEST CLUBS AND FINISHED A RESPECTABLE 13TH. THE CLUB ALSO MADE IT TO THE SEMI-FINALS OF THE BELGIAN CUP FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THEIR HISTORY, CAPPING A REMARKABLE SEASON.

AHEAD OF THE 2017-18 SEASON, **CHAMP** SPOKE TO KAS EUPEN'S BOARD MEMBER, **DR. ANDREAS BLEICHER**, AND DIRECTOR GENERAL, **CHRISTOPH HENKEL**, ABOUT THE CLUB'S MISSION, ITS DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND THE CHALLENGES THEY MIGHT FACE IN THEIR SECOND SEASON IN BELGIAN TOP LEAGUE.

Dr. Andreas Bleicher
Board Member KAS Eupen

CHAMP: In light of the club retaining its status in the Jupiler Pro League after its debut season, how different will this season's goals be compared to last season?

Bleicher: The foremost goal of KAS Eupen was, is and will continue to be the development of our players, especially the Qatari players we have and those who have come through the Aspire Football Dreams programme. Through KAS Eupen we've been able to give many young gifted players the chance to play and train in one of Europe's most competitive leagues, helping them improve on every level that's required to be a modern professional football player.

As a team, our main goal will be to stay in Jupiler Pro League for another season and improve on last year's 13th place. We are all aware though that the second year can sometimes be the most difficult as teams have had time to analyse our players and the way we play as a team and played two games against us. This obviously works both ways though so we'll be more prepared to play the teams we faced off against last season when next season comes.

CHAMP: In your opinion, what stands out as KAS Eupen's biggest accomplishment since Aspire Zone Foundation took ownership and where is the club in relation to the original objectives set out by Aspire Zone Foundation when they first bought the club?

Bleicher: When we took over at KAS Eupen we had two goals in mind; help the club get promoted and develop a sustainable management model and help develop



young talent coming through the Aspire Football Dreams programme, which will in turn would help the Qatari national team develop ahead of the country's hosting of the first Middle Eastern FIFA World Cup™ in 2022.

From a club success perspective, we're right on track, securing promotion season before last and finishing a respectable 13th and reaching the semi-final of the Belgian Cup in our first season in Belgium's top flight. We're hoping to bolster our squad ahead of this season and build on the success of last season.

We also set out to develop young players, especially Qatari players who will go on to represent their country, and again we're seeing success with our development programme. We are pleased to say that to date we have had 18 Qatari players come through the club, gaining essential pro league experience. These include the likes of Akram Afif, who will play for us again this season after a stint on loan in La Liga, and other talented young Qataris such as Ahmed Almoein and Fahad Al Abdulrahman etc. This season we'll also be welcoming Abdulkarim Hassan Fadlalla, Assim Omer Madibo and Hamza Sanhaji to the club. In total, 33 Aspire Football Dreams players have been through the club, including the now world famous Henry Onyekuru, who just signed with Everton FC, demonstrating the strength of our development programme. In the coming years, you will hear many more positive things from these talents, I am sure.

Last season our young talented squad secured some amazing victories, including against Belgian giants KAA Gent and Club Brugge KV, and we're sure next season will be much the same as our players get stronger year-on-year.

Christoph Henkel
Director General KAS Eupen

CHAMP: How would you describe KAS Eupen's policy and approach to the transfer market in relation to the ambitions of the club?

Henkel: On the one hand our aim is to improve our young talent as much as possible and focus on development programmes, yet on the other we must be open to other transfers to ensure our young players get exposure to a variety of playing styles and learn from more experienced players. Balancing youth development with additional transfers allows us to realise our targets in a sustainable way, developing talent whilst securing sustainable economic development for the club.

CHAMP: Henry Onyekuru recently became the first multi-million dollar sell from the club, can you tell us what a transfer like that does to the operations and running of KAS Eupen and just how significant a deal it was?



Henkel: A transfer like Henry Onyekuru is hugely important for the club. Firstly, it shows that the concept of the Aspire and KAS Eupen player development programme is working in the highest leagues in the world. Secondly, this increases the interest and captures the attention from clubs around the world which in turn increases the market value of our other talent coming through our development programme. We're sure scouts will be monitoring the programme closely from now on as they look for up and coming talent. Henry's success can therefore act as a reference for our other talented young players.

The income generated from Henry's sale also gave us the option to bring in other good players, which will in turn help our young players further develop and benefit from outside experience and varied playing styles whilst also helping the club achieve its goals. Income like this is also important for the sustainable management of the club.

CHAMP: What are your wishes for KAS Eupen's second season in the Jupiler Pro League?

Henkel: Survival, ensuring we are playing in the first division again in 2018-19. We'll also be looking for an improvement on last year's 13 place. These must be the club's two primary goals.

Our players progress just as the club does and success is for everyone. It will help our young players' careers and the ongoing work between Aspire and KAS Eupen will also help improve the level of the Qatari National Teams in the short-, mid- and long-

term, as Qatar nationals gain vital experience in a top European league with world class players.



FORMER ADIDAS CEO NAMED 2016 INSPIRATIONAL LEADER



THE “**INSPIRATIONAL LEADER AWARD**”, JUDGED BY ASPIRE ACADEMY, WAS CREATED TO INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS IN THE BUSINESS OF SPORT. THE AWARD IS PRESENTED ANNUALLY TO AN INDIVIDUAL WHO HAS LED FROM THE FRONT THROUGHOUT THEIR CAREER AND HAD AN UNPARALLELED GLOBAL IMPACT ON THE SPORTS INDUSTRY. FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE LATEST RECIPIENT, CARLO ANCELOTTI, ASPIRE HONORED FORMER ADIDAS GROUP CEO, **HERBERT HAINER**, AT THE “**LEADERS UNDER 40 AWARDS**” CEREMONY IN OCTOBER 2016.



The 62-year-old German has had a tremendous impact on the Adidas Group since joining the company in 1987. After holding various management positions, he was appointed CEO in 2001 and under his leadership Adidas Group sales have tripled, net income and the number of employees has quadrupled, and the value of the company has increased from €3 billion to €18 billion. But it is not only the financial metrics that stand out: under Herbert, the Adidas Group has also become one of the most sustainable corporations in Europe and one of the world's most attractive employers.

Speaking on the news that he had received the award, Hainer said: “I am extremely honored. To be considered alongside the likes of Carlo Ancelotti in terms of inspiring others and this makes me very happy. If I am able to pass on one lesson that I have learnt during my career, it would be that life is similar to the challenges facing an athlete: in sport just as in life, we have highs and lows. However, my motto is: Never give up.”

The Inspirational Leader Award is one of the highlights of the “Leaders Under 40 Awards” hosted annually by Leaders and Aspire Academy. The judges identify, evaluate and celebrate the best in the business of sport globally. In front of an audience of 400 sports business leaders, the second annual “Leaders Under 40 Awards” took place on the 4th of October 2016 at the Natural History Museum in London.

2016 LEADERS UNDER 40 AWARDS WINNERS

Digital & Technology: Diego Gigliani, SVP, Media and Innovation, City Football Group

Entrepreneurship: Tom Vernon, Founder of Right to Dream & Chairman of FC Nordsjaelland

Leadership: Elkhann Mammadov, General Secretary, Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan

Marketing & PR: Daniel Glantz, Global Head of Sponsorship, AIG

Sales: Nick Baker, Senior Vice President, AEG Global Partnerships



The 2016 edition of the **ASPIRE4SPORT Congress and Exhibition** took place at the iconic Amsterdam ArenaA on 3rd and 4th October 2016 and brought European and Qatari sports industry professionals together to build bridges and pave the way for future partnerships.

Running since 2010, ASPIRE4SPORT has established a reputation in the last six years as one of the foremost events in the sport business calendar. Feedback from delegates during this time has consistently highlighted the quality of the organisation of the event itself, the format of meetings as well as their number and frequency, and also the quality of interactions and opportunities they produce.

As in previous years, the venue for the 2016 event – Amsterdam ArenaA, the home of AFC Ajax – was crowded with large numbers of Europe's leading sports business across different sectors including construction, sports medicine, logistics, event management, communication and technology. The event provided unrivalled opportunities for businesses to meet, share ideas and develop opportunities to work together with prestigious Qatari and Middle Eastern government organisations and companies such as the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, Qatar Football Association, Qatar Stars League, Aspire Academy, Aspetar, Qatar Airways, Qatar National Bank and Qatar Olympic Committee.

The 7th edition of the event hosted face-to-face talks between 146 international suppliers and 19 exhibitors resulting in 996 scheduled business meetings, generating very positive feedback. For Ali Salem Afifa, President of ASPIRE4SPORT, the event in Amsterdam was the sequel to the event's success story. "We are delighted and proud of the success of ASPIRE4SPORT, and will continue to use this exhibition to build bridges and provide a platform for establishing international business opportunities."



THANK YOU

for making the
2016 ASPIRE ACADEMY GLOBAL SUMMIT
in Amsterdam
A GREAT SUCCESS

**>GLOBAL SUMMIT
 FOOTBALL PERFORMANCE & SCIENCE**
 3rd and 4th October, 2016
 Amsterdam Arena, The Netherlands

“RIGHT MIND SET IS KEY TO **SUCCESS**”

FC BARCELONA PLAYERS GERARD PIQUE, JORDI ALBA AND SERGIO BUSQUETS VISITED ASPIRE ACADEMY ON JULY 5 AND WERE WELCOMED BY A TEAM OF SENIOR MEMBERS FROM ASPIRE ACADEMY, COMPRISING OF MR. ALI SALEM AFIFA, DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF ASPIRE ACADEMY, MR. JASSIM AL JABER, ASPIRE ACADEMY'S SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, PROFESSOR VALTER DI SALVO, DIRECTOR OF FOOTBALL PERFORMANCE & SCIENCE, MR. MARKUS EGGER, DIRECTOR OF SPORT AND STRATEGY, AS WELL AS MR. ALI SULTAN FAKHROO, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES.



never know so I cannot rule out anything completely.”

Meanwhile, Jordi Alba advised Aspire Academy's student-athletes to soak up as much knowledge from their coaches as possible and to keep fighting to improve their level of football.

Commenting on the development of sports in Qatar, Alba added: “I talked a lot about it with my former Barcelona teammate Xavi and speaks highly about it. Step by step, the sports field in Qatar is growing. Qatar has a lot of potential and people are expecting great things from it.”

Speaking about Aspire Academy, Sergio Busquets

praised the spacious facilities and high-level of coaching, adding: “As a player, I'd personally enjoy using these facilities every day. Academies like Aspire provide a good foundation for young players to make it into professional leagues. But in order to succeed in football, you also need the right mind set. You have to be committed and passionate about what you are doing. International exposure can also benefit a player's personal and competitive development. I am sure this will also happen to Aspire Academy graduate Akram Afif in Spain.”



Professor Valter Di Salvo, Director of Football Performance & Science, took the players on a tour of Aspire Academy's facilities including a sneak peek of Aspire Academy's newest building still under construction but nearly completed

Gerard Pique, praised Aspire Academy saying it is equipped with great facilities. When asked about his retirement plans from the national team, Pique said: “I have thought a lot about this decision, and will carry it through after 2018 Russia World Cup. I'll be 31 next year, and I want to have a long career with my club FC Barcelona. To do that, sometimes you have to make sacrifices, and leaving the national team will give me more time to rest.”

Speaking about Aspire-owned Cultural y Deportiva Leonesa's promotion to Spain's Second Division, Pique added: “I think this will be a great experience for the team. It's also good for Aspire Academy because then they can send their players there to prepare them for the Qatar World Cup 2022.” Asked if like his former teammate, Xavi Hernandez, he would consider playing in Qatar someday, Pique said, “At present I would like to finish my playing career with Barcelona, but in football you



A WIN FOR EVERYONE

YEARS BEFORE THE FIRST BALL IS KICKED AT THE 2022 FIFA WORLD CUP QATAR™, THE COUNTRY HAS MADE CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS IN ESTABLISHING ITSELF AS A LEADING DESTINATION FOR INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL STARS. A MAJOR REASON FOR THIS SUCCESS IS THE INCREDIBLE FACILITIES THAT ASPIRE ACADEMY OFFERS TOP CLUBS THAT CHOOSE DOHA AS DESTINATION FOR THEIR WINTER BREAK TRAINING CAMPS. IN EARLY 2017, SOME OF THE BIGGEST NAMES IN WORLD FOOTBALL VISITED THE COUNTRY FOR THIS REASON AND EVEN COMPETED AGAINST SOME YOUNG PLAYERS THAT HAVE GRADUATED FROM THE ASPIRE ACADEMY'S FOOTBALL PROGRAMMES.



German champions **FC Bayern Munich** returned to Doha in January 2017 for a week-long winter training camp looking to make the most of their time at Aspire Zone in readiness for the second half of their Bundesliga-season. Head coach Carlo Ancelotti described their 7th training camp in Qatar as a huge success and believes it has given the club an excellent springboard to launch a strong campaign for three major competitions in the second half of the season.

"Aspire Academy is ideal for winter training camps as it offers world-class facilities. These include fantastic pitches, a hotel that's walking distance from the pitches, and of course the warm weather too. All this makes Aspire one of the very best places to hold a training camp and for teams looking to benefit in the way that we have just done," explained Ancelotti. The Italian coach has held similar winter training camps at Aspire Academy previously with his former clubs including AC Milan, Real Madrid and Paris Saint-Germain.

"They're the best training facilities in the world," said Bayern's Executive Board Chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge. The players themselves were also very positive about their time in Doha. "The training camp was super," enthused Thomas Müller ahead of Bayern's return to Germany. "The team spirit was good. We had a lot of fun and enjoyed some intense training sessions. The conditions here have been great. Everything is so focused: train, eat, and sleep. Our friendly match was a good note to end on too."

During this friendly game, the German side faced a travelling team from Belgian club **KAS Eupen**. The club from Belgium – which is owned by Aspire Zone Foundation – also travelled to Doha for a winter training camp, as they also did the year before. However this time they returned to Doha as a Jupiler Pro League team – the country's top league competition for clubs – after securing promotion at the end of the last season. The squad led by head coach Jordi Condom Aulí included four Qatari players – Fahad al-Abdulrahman, Monqeth Adi, Mohamed al-Bakry and Bassam Hisham – all of whom are graduates from Aspire Academy. It also featured 12 former players from the 'Aspire Football Dreams' programme.

Al-Abdulrahman, who has cemented his place in the Eupen side as left back, said of the training camp: "It has been an exceptional week back here at Aspire Academy and I thoroughly enjoyed this training camp. We put in some hard work and benefited from playing against Bayern and Shanghai. For me personally, I was inspired by the chance to play against top players like Arjen Robben, Robert

Lewandowski and Franck Ribery in the Bayern game, and I learnt a lot from marking Brazilian Hulk in the match against Shanghai SIPG. When you face players of this quality and know that you have competed well against them, it lifts you up. I hope on a personal level, as well as the rest of the team, to carry this experience forward into the second half of the season."

In the game against Bayern Munich, the Belgian side initially put up a tough fight and it took until the very last minute of the first half for the German visitors to take the lead. During the second half, the German side asserted their dominance more comprehensively, running out eventual 5-0 winners. In Eupen's second game, they faced the Chinese Super League club **Shanghai SIPG**, who were also holding a winter break training camp in Doha. Some members of the Chinese team were quite familiar with the facilities at Aspire Academy, since head coach Andres Villas-Boas and the Brazilian striker Hulk had visited during previous winters with their former club Zenit Saint Petersburg. Once again KAS Eupen faced a star-studded team including big names like the club's latest signings Oscar and Ricardo Carvalho. In this game, Eupen triumphed and won by a solitary goal scored by French midfielder Florian Taulemesse, who calmly slotted home a penalty in the 75th minute.

For KAS Eupen head coach Jordi Condom, the winter training camp provided a welcome opportunity to fine tune things ahead of the second half of the season. "This is a fairly young side with some recent arrivals, so it has been good to have a chance to look at all the players and work on new strategies. Of course, the conditions and environment suited our objectives. And to be able to play two competitive matches, during which we deployed some of our new tactics, provided an immense boost for us as we restart the league and look to make our mark during the rest of the season."



WELCOME ANITA WŁODARCZYK

POLISH HAMMER THROWER, WORLD RECORD HOLDER, WORLD CHAMPION AND 2016 OLYMPIC CHAMPION ANITA WŁODARCZYK HELD A THREE WEEK TRAINING CAMP IN QATAR AT ASPIRE ACADEMY AT THE END OF 2016. THE 31-YEAR-OLD, WHO IS THE FIRST WOMAN IN HISTORY TO THROW THE HAMMER OVER 80M, WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HER COACH KALISZEWSKI KRYSZTOF AND PHYSIOTHERAPIST, DORIAN LOMZA. DURING HER TRAINING CAMP AT ASPIRE ACADEMY SHE SPOKE TO CHAMP ABOUT SOME IMPORTANT MOMENTS OF HER CAREER.

ANITA WŁODARCZYK ON...

Workout: I throw five times a week. I also work on technical training and drills. The other sessions involve strength conditioning and stuff like rhythm, timing speed and core strength. Just like rotational shot putters, us hammer throwers have borrowed a number of technical models from the discus, a sport I practiced and competed in earlier on in my athletic career. The number of turns required are more technical which means the drill work is very intense and helps me improve my hammer technique during competition.

How she improves her results: Strange as it might seem but my coach and I figured out that in order to improve my throwing technique, and break World Records, I need to make what we call "small mistakes" during my technical training. This helps me focus on what the right technique is during competition and eliminate the bad technical habits that lead to small mistakes.

Aspire student hammer throwers: The first time I met and trained with Aspire students was in 2015 in Stellenbosch, South Africa and then we were together again training in Cetniewo in Poland just before World Junior Championships. The students present were Moaaz Ibrahim and Khalil Bedoui. They were good then but I've noticed during my time during this training camp at Aspire that their techniques have improved greatly and it's evident they've been doing some very focused strength and technique training. If they keep it up the sky is the limit for them.

Motivation: My big motivation is seeing that people back in my homeland of Poland are proud of my results and achievements in sport. The medals and records I have achieved so far keep me motivated in my sport but before all this, when I started hammer throwing, my main motivation was Kamila Skolimowska who was also my good friend and won gold in our event at 2000 Sydney Summer Olympic Games. Since her tragic death in 2009, I have become an ambassador for the "Kamila Skolimowska Foundation" and I help organise events and competitions for the Foundation. This keeps me motivated on a daily basis and helps me push myself every day.



Aspire Academy as a training venue: I usually train in Poland at the Cetniewo Olympic Training Centre, in Stellenbosch in South Africa and at Chula Vista Olympic Training Center in California in the USA. This time round I decided to change things a bit and come here to see what Aspire offers as a training camp. I must say I am very pleased with the facilities here, they're second to none. It is really an ideal place to hold a training camp and I am very happy to be here.

What she enjoyed while in Qatar: When I am on training camps I try and see as much of the country I am in as possible. While in Qatar I enjoyed exploring Doha's West Bay area and also walking around the Souq Waqif at night and taking in the smells, sights and sounds. The most exciting thing for me though was visiting the desert and driving on sand dunes. The locals call it 'dune bashing' and it was really great fun and one of my best experiences here.

Her best moment in sport: I have had a few special moments but winning my first World Championship gold medal is up there, as is the World Record too. There are not many athletes who can say they achieved that feat. I also count among my most memorable sporting moments, first breaking the 80m barrier at the annual Kamila Skolimowska Memorial Throws Festival in 2015 as well as being able to set my current world record of 82.98m at the same event on 28 August 2016.

A prediction that came true: I first met Aspire Academy Senior Throws Coach, Ivica Jakeljic, back in 2008 at a European winter Throwing Cup in his hometown of Spil in Croatia. I won that competition with a new Personal Best (PB) and that time I threw over 70m officially for the first time. Coach Ivica said to me that I would be a future World Champion and World Record holder. He must have had a crystal ball or something as these both came true and I'm the currently World Record holder and World Champion.

MEET
SOME
OF THE
INSPIRING
PEOPLE WE RECENTLY
WELCOMED AT
ASPIRE ACADEMY

1. **Steve McLaren**, English professional football manager

2. **Veronica Campbell-Brown**, Jamaican sprinter and eight-time Olympic medalist

3. **Thomas Bach**, President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC)

4. **Katerina Stefanidi**, Greek Pole Vaulter and 2016 Olympic Champion

5. **Kim Collins**, sprinter from Saint Kitts and Nevis and former World Champion in the 100m

6. **Adriano Galliani**, Vice-President and CEO of AC Milan and
Giuseppe Marotta, Director General and Sports Department CEO of Juventus FC

IMPRINT

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