

World First for UK duo

Liverpool look to lead the way in India

Liverpool made it's first significant move to become the most popular English club in India to today, when it launched an innovative Football Development Centre in Pune, India.

The Anfield club has teamed up with Cheshire based international football company, **Kickworldwide** and the **Bharati Vidyapeeth University** to create the world's first centre aimed at creating football industry professionals for the booming Indian football market.

Last year EPL clubs were criticised by some of the biggest names in India football for providing false hope to Indian youngsters and for their short term approach to this rapidly developing market.

A number of English clubs have visited India in recent years and looked to develop football academies in conjunction with some of the countries leading corporate organisations.

Liverpool however has adopted a highly innovative approach that will genuinely assist the development of the football industry in India.

With Kickworldwide, the Reds have created the 'Abhijit Kadam Football Development Centre' in one of India's most dynamic cities, Pune. The centre is based within the campus of the Bharati Vidyapeeth University, which boasts nearly 250,000 students and is named after the son of the founder, Dr. Patangrao Kadam.

Abhijit, an avid football player, was tragically killed in a car crash, and since then, his family, led by his brother Vishwajeet, has devoted much of its time to enhancing the level of football in India in his memory.

Students at the centre will be able to enrol on a number of football related courses, which are to be delivered in partnership with some leading UK colleges. The courses include, coaching, refereeing, Sports Science, Sports Turf technology and Football Industry Management. Most of the curriculum will be delivered in Pune but students will be offered the chance to complete some of their studies in the UK.

Aspiring young footballers will be able to combine their studies with football playing under the guidance of Liverpool FC coaches.

The Centre was officially launched to the media today and will open its doors to students in September to deliver courses in sports science, coaching and refereeing. Other courses will be added in January.

Liverpool Commercial Director, **Ian Ayre**, who attended today's launch in Pune, commented "As a football club we always strive to find important partners and important opportunities in a market like India. To get this right we have to invest for the long term and in the right areas. As a highly successful football club with great heritage and a historic level of success, this is very much an opportunity to share our experience across all the disciplines of the game, not just the playing side.

Anyone who has ever been to Anfield to watch one of our games will tell you that what we have here is unique. Our fans are and always have been innovative, inclusive and often break from tradition. The more of that type of unique approach we can export and include in our developing overseas ambitions, the better chance we have of long term success and successful partnerships in this or any overseas market.

This project brings football together with first class education and an ambition to feed the Indian game. Its certainly an exciting start and one of a variety of key projects that Liverpool Football Club will unveil in the Indian market over the coming months"

Steve Bellis, Director of Kickworldwide added "This is a highly significant day in the history of Indian football. The football Development Centre will create a number of football industry professionals for the game in India and will help to build a strong infrastructure for the sport. It is heart warming to see one of world's biggest football clubs adopting such a long term and sincere approach to a developing market and the primary aim of the FDC (Football Development Centre) is to support Indian football development to a level where it can compete with the best in the world"

One man who has done more than most in recent years to push the development of football in India is **Vishwajeet Kadam**. A highly respected educationalist, politician, industrialist, social worker and sportsman, Vishwajeet is determined to take Indian football to the highest level.

As secretary of Bharati Vidyapeeth University and Vice president of the Western India Football Association, Vishwajeet is delighted to have the support of Liverpool and Kickworldwide. He revealed "the AKMFDC is a project that was born with the simple ideology of producing budding professionals with an aim of continuing the passion my brother Abhijit had for the game."

He explained, "Abhijit was a die-hard player with a burning desire to excel. The AKMFDC thus provides a platform for likeminded to excel and pursue the game, which is surrounded by the myth - that in India football does not have a career."

"In fact, when the project was conceived we at AKMF were looking at starting a venture of such big magnitude on if we were able to convince and rope in a big name from the world of football to be associated. Liverpool fits the bill and moreover their 'sustained' interest and thanks to Kickworldwide's persistence has enabled the FDC become reality."

The launch was attended by the Secretary General of the All India Football Federation, Mr. Alberto Colaco and the British Deputy High Commissioner for India, Vicki Treadell.

Liverpool and Kickworldwide plan to open a second centre in China early next year.