

New Jockey Club initiative brings together Manchester United and local professionals to cultivate local football talent

The Hong Kong Jockey Club announced on 8 November that it would extend its collaboration with Manchester United Football Club and the Hong Kong Football Association to support the development of local players through two pioneering programmes – the **Jockey Club Youth Football Fitness Assessment** and **Jockey Club School Football Development Scheme**. It is hoped that by bringing together overseas and local professionals in football training and sports science, these new initiatives will offer opportunities for young players to reach their full potential and take youth football as well as other sports development in Hong Kong a further important step forward.

In line with its mission of enhancing the quality of life for all Hong Kong people, the Club has made enormous contributions to the city through tax and charitable donations. In particular, the Club has been a keen supporter of sports development in Hong Kong, with its contributions to local football development exceeding HK\$170 million over the past few years.

Chief Executive Officer Winfried Engelbrecht-Bresges stressed at today's announcement that the Club was not only funding these new initiatives, but also taking the lead in driving them. "For any project to be successful, it is not just about the funding, but also the strategic partnership involved that brings the project to execution," he observed, noting that by combining the local and overseas expertise of Manchester United Soccer School (MUSS), the Hong Kong Football Association (HKFA), the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), these visionary programmes would for the first time offer a total approach to the development of local football talent.

"We hope these programmes will help advance the physical, social and mental developments of our young generation, building leadership ability and inspiring Hong Kong's renowned 'can do' spirit," Mr Engelbrecht-Bresges explained.

Manchester United Group Managing Director Richard Arnold said he believed the two new programmes would bring about closer collaboration between the Jockey Club and Manchester United with a view to nurturing Hong Kong's football culture. "The Hong Kong Jockey Club's commitment to inspiring today's youth, through football, not only enhances physical well-being, but promotes social development too," he commented. "This echoes the values of Manchester United in using football as a platform to enrich the development of young people around the world."

"Hong Kong is a very special place for Manchester United as it is home to over two million passionate followers and the Club's Asian office, our first ever office outside the UK," added Mr Arnold.

For the first time, the Jockey Club is uniting local and international sports science experts with support from the HKSI and the Hong Kong Jockey Club Sports Medicine & Health Sciences Centre of CUHK to establish a football-specific fitness assessment protocol for youth players - the **Jockey Club Youth Football Fitness Assessment**. The programme will help local coaches better understand the athletic potential of their young players and prescribe optimal training. The assessment data, together with corresponding data from the UK provided by Manchester United, will be revealed later this year with Manchester United coaching staff and local sports science experts sharing their insights on the pioneering study.

Meanwhile, to bring international football coaching standard to Hong Kong schools, MUSS Head Coach Christopher O'Brien will lead the **Jockey Club School Football Development Scheme**. Mr O'Brien will station in Hong Kong and pay regular visits to 14 participating secondary schools. Each school will be provided with a MUSS "coaching toolbox" which includes coach workshops and resource packs. The schools have been carefully selected to ensure students from different social strata across the city can benefit from the professional training and positive learning environment provided by MUSS.

The Jockey Club has been working hand-in-hand with MUSS over the past two summers with rewarding results. The Jockey Club Elite Football Camp has so far given 128 budding players the chance to receive world-class training from MUSS. Four outstanding players from the Camp have had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to join the MUSS residential training programmes for a week in the United Kingdom, funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust.



The Hong Kong Jockey Club's Chief Executive Officer Winfried Engelbrecht-Bresges says that the Club is not only funding the new initiatives with Manchester United, but also taking the lead in driving them.



Club CEO Winfried Engelbrecht-Bresges (right), Manchester United Managing Director, Asia Pacific Jamie Reigle (left) sign a charter agreeing the partnership programmes between the Club and Manchester United.



Club CEO Winfried Engelbrecht-Bresges (middle), Manchester United Group Managing Director Richard Arnold (right) and HKFA Vice-Chairman Pui Kwan Kay (left) officiate at the “Put Our Best Foot Forward - Youth Development through Football” ceremony.