

Odisha unveils 15 local footballers for inaugural AIFF-FIFA Talent Academy

Bhubaneswar, February 20, 2024: In a significant development for sports in Odisha, fifteen exceptional local footballers were unveiled as part of the inaugural batch of the AIFF-FIFA Talent Academy in Bhubaneswar. The ceremony, attended by Sports Director, Shri Siddhartha Das, Joint Secretary, Shri Bijayananda Naik, Technical Director, AIFF, Syed Sabir Pasha, Secretary FAO, Shri Asirbad Behera, and Joint Secretary, FAO, Avijit Paul, marks a significant stride forward for football development in the region.

This collaborative effort between the All India Football Federation (AIFF), FIFA, and the Government of Odisha underscores a shared commitment to developing footballing talent across India. The establishment of this academy heralds a new era of football development, providing a platform for young athletes to hone their skills and realize their full potential.

Highlighting the significance of the development, Sports Secretary, Shri Vineel Krishna said, "Today is a landmark moment for football in Odisha. For our footballers, this is an unprecedented opportunity to receive the highest quality of training under the watchful eyes of FIFA coaches. Furthermore, it is a matter of pride that our infrastructure will be deployed to help strengthen football across the country. Best of luck to all the athletes."

Echoing these sentiments, FIFA TDS Talent Coach, Sergi Amezcua, said, "By launching this program we aim to increase global competitiveness by supporting each member association to reach its full potential. FIFA is here to support AIFF and Odisha."

Joining these fifteen athletes from Odisha will be thirty footballers under the age of 14 from various parts of India. Together, they will form a cohort under the guidance of coaches appointed by FIFA, supported by personnel from the AIFF and the Odisha government.

While the athletes from Odisha will follow a tailored program, their progress will be closely monitored by FIFA coaches overseeing the elite program. The academy boasts world-class infrastructure, including two FIFA-certified natural turfs and modern facilities for entertainment, dining, fitness, rehabilitation, and education. This holistic environment is designed to nurture not only athletic prowess but also personal and academic growth.