

Emirates takes young Football for Hope players under its wing

DUBAI, UAE/JOHANNESBURG: Emirates, the award-winning airline of the United Arab Emirates, is helping a team of Australian youths get off to a flying start at the Football for Hope Festival 2010 in Johannesburg.



The team: From left, second row: Areti Theodorou; Teresa Yuol; Yom Mapiou; Hemanta Acharya with Coach Simon Bell. From left, first row: Makhaleh Al-anezi; Ahmed Thafer; Mubasher Hassan; Melvin Rivera.

The Football for Hope Festival, an official event of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, will see 32 teams of young people from disadvantaged communities around the world come together for a festival of education, culture and football. Selected for their contribution to building a better future in their respective communities, the teams will compete without any referees, any disputes on the field being resolved through dialogue - a method proven to encourage personal development and mutual understanding.

Emirates will fly players from an Australian refugee football development programme called Football United to South Africa for the festival. The team, which went through an intensive selection process, includes participants from families that have survived hardship and trauma in their home countries such as Burundi, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Using football as a positive force

Fouad Caunhye, Emirates' regional manager for Southern Africa, said: "As an Official Partner of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, Emirates is committed to supporting the beautiful game not just at the highest level but from the grassroots upwards.

"We are delighted to be playing a role in the Football for Hope Festival, which aims to use football as a positive force for change and to improve the lives of disadvantaged young people. "We believe that many will return home after the festival with a broadened perspective - whether in football, cultural diversity or social issues - which they can then relay to the rest

of their community."

CEO of Football United, Anne Bunde-Birouste said: "The Football for Hope Festival is an extraordinary example of the positive power of football and how it can change lives and build communities. We feel privileged to be a part of it and are greatly appreciative to Emirates for enabling us to make the trip."

A dream come true

Team captain, Melvin Riveira said: "With Football United, I have enjoyed helping people in different ways and the team has helped me develop these skills. I am really excited to meet other teams from across the world and share this with them, as well as playing football with them"

Cyprus-born Theodorou Areti Theodorou, is still in shock after being chosen to represent Australia at the Football for Hope Festival. "It is a dream come true, really. I mean, it's the World Cup!" Theodorou, 18, said. Not only will Theodorou be playing the game she loves, she will also be taking on additional responsibility in filming and photographing the tour, the footage from which will be utilised in a documentary about Football United and the tour to South Africa.

As well as taking part on the pitch, the Football United team will join the other participating teams in workshops aimed at developing their football coaching skills, engaging in serious discussions around social issues such as HIV/Aids and enabling them to interact with each other. There will also be a sightseeing trip around Johannesburg.

The Football for Hope Festival is organised by FIFA, streetfootballworld, the 2010 FIFA World Cup Organising Committee South Africa and the City of Johannesburg. The festival takes place at a specially constructed mini-stadium at No. 3 Square in Alexandra, Johannesburg. As part of the legacy of the festival, the main pitch will be donated to the community as part of a Football for Hope Centre, one of 20 to be constructed across Africa as part of '20 Centres for 2010', the official campaign of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

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