



Press Release

ASPIRE CELEBRATES FIRST GRADUATE TO PLAY FOR NATIONAL TEAM OF QATAR

Fahad Khalfan Al Bulushi makes debut against Bahrain

Sunday, 5 September 2010, Doha, Qatar: ASPIRE Academy for Sports Excellence have congratulated Fahad Khalfan Al Bulushi for becoming the first graduate of the Academy to make his debut for the national football team of Qatar.

The historic moment came midway through the second half during Qatar's 1-1 draw against Bahrain on the weekend.

Fahad Khalfan received his call up to the national team after outstanding performances for Al Rayyan in the pre-season competition.

ASPIRE Director of Sport Wayde Clews congratulated Fahad Khalfan and said the Academy hoped to produce many more players for Qatar's national team.

"To have one of our players make his full debut for Qatar is a major boost for all of the staff at ASPIRE. Fahad improved enormously last year under the guidance of our coaches," said Clews

"Working in what is proving to be a successful system, the debut of Fahad demonstrates that ASPIRE has the necessary knowledge, support system and infrastructure to prepare young footballers to excel and go on to represent the national teams of Qatar."

"Our coaches should be congratulated for this achievement especially our head coach Michael Browne and his team. I am sure this will be the first of many ASPIRE graduates to represent the senior national team of Qatar."

Excited about his first experience among the elite in the senior national team of Qatar, ASPIRE 2010 graduate Fahad Khalfan commented "it was a great moment for me when Coach Bruno Metsu put me on the list of the 23 players. My happiness was even bigger when he put me on the substitute list and gave me the chance to play my first ever minutes with the senior national team. I really would like to thank my coaches at ASPIRE Academy where I received all the guidance to be prepared to play this level of competition."

Fahad Khalfan has made a very good start this season immediately after his graduation last June, with his QSL first division club Al-Rayyan. He has quickly won his place with the first team during the pre-season Sheikh Jassim Cup when he distinguished himself by scoring some decisive goals.

ASPIRE Head Football Coach Michael Browne said the performances of Fahad Khalfan was a justification for playing talented young footballers.

“The main difficulty we face at the moment is that the majority of our 1991 and 1992 players are concentrated at a small number of clubs and it is difficult for them to get regular first team games which are what they need,” said Browne.

“If this problem can be overcome then I am very confident that in the not so distant future the vast majority of Senior National Team players will be from ASPIRE.”

“It is often difficult for the coaches at the bigger clubs to play young players but it is clear that Paulo Autori at Al Rayyan thinks highly of several of our ASPIRE graduates and is confident that they can step up and perform at first team level. Fortunately for Fahad, Paulo gave him his chance and he has now been able to make the next step and represent Qatar.”

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Notes to Editors:

Created in 2004, the ASPIRE Academy for Sports Excellence in Doha has the dual aims of identifying and transforming promising student-athletes into world-renowned champions across a wide range of sports, and to act as a beacon to draw sporting culture into the center of life in Qatar and the surrounding region.

The Academy is distinguished by a philosophy which aims to develop the student as a whole, providing him with full academic, social and sporting development.

Unrivalled facilities, housed in and around the world’s largest purpose-built indoor sports dome, ensure the Academy’s reputation as one of the foremost sporting and educational institutions in the entire international community, enticing an ever-increasing number of visitors and users, from sporting legends to global political leaders.

Every aspect of the development of elite athletes is catered for by one indoor and seven outdoor football pitches, athletics tracks, an Olympic-sized swimming pool, diving pool, combat arenas, gymnastics arena, special fitness weight rooms, lecture halls, dormitories to accommodate what will eventually become 1,000 students, a medical center and many more facilities.

In 2010, ASPIRE hosted the IAAF World Indoor Athletics Championships, attracting a record number of countries (149) and participants (more than 1,100 athletes and officials). The event also witnessed the first-ever world record on Qatari soil – Teddy Tamgho of France setting a new world indoor record of 17.90 meters in the Triple Jump.

The WIC saw too the first ASPIRE graduate to take part in a major world championship. High jumper Mutaz Essa Barshim is also the first graduate of the Academy to hold a national record in an Olympic sport.

In a move unique in world sport, ASPIRE has signed a cooperation agreement with the Qatar Association of Athletics Federation (QAAF), the core objective of which is to produce elite athletes able to represent Qatar, with success, at major international athletics events and meetings. QAAF’s

most talented young athletes are to become student-athletes at ASPIRE Academy, where they will receive both their training and education.

Launched in 2007, the ASPIRE Football Dreams project annually tests more than 600.000 young footballers from all over the world, including Africa, Asia and Latin America, as part of the largest-ever talent search within the sport.

The ASPIRE ACTIVE initiative is a community engagement program spread across the country, ensuring that thousands of the nation's residents have accessible and advanced health and fitness activities as routine aspects of their lives. Each social group is catered for by tailor-made classes and programs.