

Football in India

Billions of people all over the world experience the joy of football. Football is everywhere. India is no exception. With a population of more than 1.2 billion, you'd expect India to be one of the world's football superpowers. Unfortunately there is a long way to go. The current FIFA World Ranking of 149th place confirms the same. 1950 was the last time when India qualified for a World Cup. India was beaten in qualifiers for the AFC Challenge Cup by Myanmar. To give a new impulse to this sport for the masses, over the years several initiatives have been taken including collaboration with foreign clubs.

Foreign collaboration: Examples of a few initiatives

1. The Indian Tigers Football Alliance [ITFA) began its journey as a successful 'Football Training Academy' focused on identifying, training and developing young footballers. ITFA has joined hands with Team Tours Direct International, one of UK's leading operators of sporting tournaments and sports festivals and has branched out into the field of international sports events and talent scouting. This has enabled students reach their maximum potential in their athletic ambitions¹.
2. In September 2006, as part of a broad cultural agreement, India and Brazil signed an agreement to cooperate in promoting exchanges in the field of football and training of Indian players and coaches². At that time India was ranked 136 in football. If countries like Brazil, with a similar socio-economic back ground, can be World Champions over and over again, India should also start tapping its talents.
3. In November 2010, the Haryana Football Association [HFA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding [MoU) with Dutch Haryana Foundation [DHF) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry [FICCI) to establish a Centre of Excellence for Soccer [CoES) in the state and to develop, operate and manage football centres and infrastructures. DHF and FICCI will provide the state football association strategic cooperation. According to the terms, DHF will establish a consortium of Dutch sports organisations, which will focus on long-term football development programs. ADO Den Haag, Royal Dutch Football Association, Johan Cryuff Institute etc. are going to be some of the organisations³. The India leg of the football programme involving the top Dutch Under-16 football club , Ado Den Haag, and teams in Haryana was completed in march 2011. There is a plan of taking Haryana players to the Netherlands in the second lap of the agreement⁴.
4. ADO Den Haag was approached by the Football Federation and Olympic Committee of Haryana [India) to help improve the level of football in Haryana, in particular the

¹ <http://www.indiantigers.co.in>

² <http://sports.ndtv.com/football/news/17046-brazil-to-train-indian-footballers>

³ http://zeenews.india.com/news/football/haryana-football-association-signs-mou-with-dhf-and-ficci_668938.html

⁴ <http://www.sportzpower.com/?q=node/13563/pdf>



youth football. The Under 16 [B2] team of football club ADO Den Haag travelled to India to train and to participate in exhibition matches. They visited Haryana from 26th February to 9th March, 2011⁵.

5. In December 2012 FC Barcelona announced that they were going to open a football academy in India in April 2013. FC Barcelona became the second European football club to start its own football school in India after Manchester United. FCBEscola Delhi will be the Catalan club's seventh international school, and will be based out of Heritage School, Delhi. The school will be run in partnership with Conscient Football, a football development initiative by property developer Conscient Group, which also runs the Heritage group of schools⁶. FCBarcelona have tied up with Conscient Football and have launched their entry into India through their trademark FCBarcelona football camps. FCBarcelona football camps 2013⁷.
6. In an attempt to promote football in a cricket crazy country and attract the youth to the sport, former England and Liverpool player Steve McMahon in August 2011 announced the launch of 'Steve McMahon Football Academy' in association with the British club⁸.
7. Premier India Football Academy [PIFA] is a football academy dedicated to training young children. It strongly believes that the road to India's FIFA World Cup is through the children, they are the future of India. PIFA organizes camps in Europe & in India with UEFA coaches as well as runs a training academy in Mumbai. All coaches are AFC / FA/ UEFA licensed. They have a men's & women's team in the Mumbai District Football Association [MDFA] league. PIFA has tie ups with the best youth academy soccer schools in the world and are associated with institutions such as: Bobby Charlton Soccer & Sports Academy, Rangers Soccer School, AC Milan Academy, Cruzeiro Esporte Clube, Everton FC Youth Academy, H8S Academias de Fútbol Barcelona, Coaching Connexions and Rangers Soccer School. PIFA Vision - India in the 2022 World Cup!!!⁹.
8. The Navi Mumbai regional academy, which opened its doors in May 2012, is the first of eight such centres planned for India in 2012 and 2013, all financed to the tune of \$500,000 USD by FIFA's Goal programme. A pioneering initiative, the complex based in Maharashtra is set to provide the I-League and the Indian national team with their stars of the future. Located on large school premises in the township of Vashi in Mumbai, the regional academy, run by the All India Football Federation [AIFF]¹⁰.
9. Since 2007, the KNVB [Royal Dutch Football Association] cooperates with Magic Bus [a NGO from Mumbai - www.magicbus.org]. Their Sport for Development program

⁵ http://adodenhaag.nl/nieuws/laatste-nieuws/news/detail/3811_news#.UW5tbKL-HzM

⁶ <http://www.livemint.com/Consumer/Nz5ZxC3C0ish9KndP2ng4J/FC-Barcelona-sets-up-football-school-in-India.html>

⁷ <http://fcbarcelonasoccercamps.in/>

⁸ <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Steve-McMahon-Football-Academy/140093762761820>

⁹ <http://pifa.co.in>

¹⁰ <http://www.fifa.com/aboutfifa/news/newsid=1698588/index.html>



reaches many children in the vast slums of India. Yearly, the KNVB educates several Magic Bus staff members and invites two coaches to the KNVB International Coaching Course in Zeist. In addition to these projects, the KNVB, in consultation with Magic Bus, assigned staff members of the organization as consultants to the Ozone Group 'Football Academy' project. This project, started in 2011, is an exclusive partnership with the Ozone Group, a property developer from Bangalore. Aim is to set up the first social football school in India. The coaches involved are trained by the KNVB WorldCoaches program. In this way, these two parties use their social role in the community in working towards a better future for children in India¹¹.

10. The Western India Football Association [WIFA], responsible for the promotion of the game in the state of Maharashtra, in November 2011, introduced the Manchester United Soccer Schools¹² [MUSS] coaching program at their headquarters at Cooperage, making use of specially created mini fields of Astroturf. The WIFA and MUSS have joined hands to make available to every aspiring young footballer the world's best club-sanctioned coaching program¹³.
11. East Bengal Football School of Excellence [EBFSE] is an international level football school which is a joint collaboration of Football club - East Bengal and Management partner R.M. Sportstainment. The aim of the Football School is to provide international quality training based on modern scientific methods¹⁴.
12. In April 2008, Bayern Munich did try to set up an Academy in Kolkata but the West Bengal government failed to provide them the land they asked for¹⁵.
13. During the last economic mission to India in 2012, a collaboration was signed between the cities of Amsterdam and Mumbai. Added to the goal of strengthening trade relations, this collaboration also strives to stimulate businesses on improving their social policies. The start shot for this social goal has been given by the mayor of Amsterdam, Mr. Eberhard van der Laan, by initiating the construction of several Cruyff Courts¹⁶. Cruyff Courts are the number one product of the Johan Cruyff Foundation, started by the world famous football player Johan Cruyff. The courts are self contained, smaller football and game fields where children, school-related or not, can play sports. They are the modern alternative to the green public playground which, in many cities, has been sacrificed because of urbanisation. Currently there are over 150 Cruyff Courts in the Netherlands and 25 around the rest of the world, all encouraging millions of children to engage in sport. Three Cruyff Courts will be constructed in Mumbai¹⁷.

¹¹ <http://www.worldcoaches.nl/en/main/where-we-are/#worldmap>

¹² <http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150537178933323.381818.99492953322&type=3>

¹³ <http://www.wifa.in/?p=256>

¹⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/ebfse>

¹⁵ http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/business/bayern-munich-to-open-football-academy-in-west-bengal_10043330.html

¹⁶ http://indodutchconnect.com/articles/winning-pitch_839.html

¹⁷ <http://nesrinebouhab.wordpress.com/about-the-johan-cruyff-project>



14. United Cheers Cheerleaders, the cheerleaders of football club ADO Den Haag participated in the opening of the India's cricket season on 2nd April, 2013 in Kolkata¹⁸.
15. Seeking India's future soccer stars by ex-Bundesliga striker Wynton Rufer¹⁹.

Local initiatives: Football clubs & entrepreneurs of India

1. *Jamsedji Nusserwanji Tata envisaged not only Asia's first fully integrated Steel Plant but also the model township of Jamshedpur. He advised his son, Sir Dorab Tata, to earmark "areas for Football, Hockey and Parks....". Tata Steel's commitment to sports, in fact, preceded the building of the township. The aforesaid letter was written in 1902 and the site for Jamshedpur selected in 1907. The Tata Football Academy was conceived in 1983 and inaugurated in 1987²⁰.*
2. A History of the All India Football Federation [AIFF]: The All India Football Federation celebrates its 75th anniversary on 23 June 2012. After several acrimonious meetings and intensive deliberations, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) came into existence in the summer of 1937. After Independence, the AIFF sought affiliation to the world body FIFA. So eleven years after being founded, the AIFF joined FIFA in 1948. The AIFF has played an active role in promoting football, not only in the country, but also in Asia. India was one of the founder members of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) in 1954. The AFC was formed when several Asian delegates met during the 2nd Asian Games in Manila in 1954²¹.
3. Sesa Football Academy is a unit of Sesa Community Development Foundation, which is promoted by Sesa Goa Limited with the sole objective of being of service to the community in their operational areas. SFA has two academies for junior level, which began functioning from June 1999 at Sanquelim, Goa, and for senior level, which started from June 2008 at Sirsaim, Goa. SFA is committed in encouraging and fostering local football talent. Sesa Football Academy caters for football development and also provides the opportunity to gain educational qualifications. The academy has already produced players into the professional game since inception in 1999²².
4. Nearly three decades after the inauguration of the much-revered Tata Football Academy, electronics giants Panasonic has set up a state-of-the-art residential football school, similar to the one in Jamshedpur, in Haryana. It is already running

¹⁸ <http://www.omroepwest.nl/nieuws/25-03-2013/cheerleaders-ado-den-haag-naar-india>

¹⁹ <http://www.dw.de/seeking-indias-future-soccer-stars/a-16566472>

²⁰ <http://www.tatafootballacademy.com/introduction.asp>

²¹ <http://www.sportskeeda.com/2012/06/23/a-history-of-the-all-india-football-federation-aiff/#ixzz2SgRfTOvb>

²² <http://www.sesafootball.com>



an academy in Rohtak, and another, likely to be set up in Gurgaon, is in the pipeline²³.

5. Bhaichung Bhutia Football Schools established in different cities of India with a goal to provide world class football coaching in India, caters coaching to children in the age group of 5 to 18 years²⁴.
6. The Mohun Bagan SAIL Football Academy [MBSFA] is a joint venture between Mohun Bagan Athletic Club and the Steel Authority of India Limited. The Academy serves as a youth football academy, as far as scouting, harnessing and the production of young footballing talent is concerned, in and for India. It started functioning in July 2003 and started functioning in terms of player production from 2004 onwards. The academy is based in the steel city of Durgapur²⁵.
7. The Mohun Bagan Football School is formed in March 2011. It is a novel project for youth development initiatives and bought a large number of schools under this initiative and already formed a multi-national, multi-ethnicity football team with the best school level footballers available at this age group. The scheme has introduced a "pay-n-play scheme" where it gives an opportunity to the normal school boys to play on the club facilities, watch the important national league matches, get involved with important Sporting events happening in the city and share the same dressing rooms with the Senior teams²⁶.
8. India United Football Academy [IUFA] is a not for profit organization committed to popularizing the game of football. It operates football training centres and coaching academies in Delhi and National Capital Region and the academy provides a wide range of services²⁷.
9. The objective of Peninsula Pune Football Club Academy [PPFCA] is to provide the mainstream of Pune FC home-grown talents. That apart the aim is to hone talent and also begin a production line of young footballers trained and oriented to international standards available to clubs within India²⁸.
10. Sports & Education Promotion Trust [SEPT] was established to promote sports development in India with focus on football. Started in 2004 and based in Calicut, the trust has set up 41 centres called "football nurseries" spread across 11 districts in Kerala. SEPT identifies talented children from rural, tribal and coastal areas in difficult living conditions with targeted sport initiatives²⁹.
11. India is expected to become the most populous country in the world by 2030. Football leaders in the country also want it to become established a global force in

²³ <http://sports.ndtv.com/football/news/203816-panasonic-starts-state-of-the-art-football-academy-in-haryana>

²⁴ <http://www.bbfootballschools.com>

²⁵ <http://www.mbsfa.org>

²⁶ <http://mohunbaganforyouth.com>

²⁷ <http://iufa.weebly.com>

²⁸ <http://punefc.com/>

²⁹ <http://www.itaspire.net/sept1/index.php>



the sport by then. Subject to confirmation by FIFA Executive Committee, the hosting of the FIFA U-17 World Cup in 2017 will be in India.

12. In October 2012 WIFA in collaboration with the All India Football Federation [AIFF], launched it's first-ever Grassroots Football Programme in Mizoram. Twenty-eight coaches will lead the programme, which is expected to run for three months and will cater for children between the ages of six and 12. A number of them are expected to end up in football academies³⁰.

13. On 26th March 2012 the Chief Minister Shri Manohar Parrikar in his budget speech in the Goa Legislative Assembly made the announcement that Football would be the Official State sport for the State of Goa. he also announced that Dr. Rufino Monteiro who is a well known Cardiologist who has a deep passion for Football would be the Chairman of the Goa Football Development Council. On 29th July 2012 the GFDC office premises was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister with its office at Myles High Corporate Hub 6th Floor, Patto, Panjim, Goa.

GFDC is a registered society of the Govt. Of Goa created to work for the development of game of Football in the State of Goa. They supplement and compliment the efforts of the Goa Football Association (GFA), All-India Football Federation (AIFF), Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)³¹.

14. FIFA and India³²

15. Indian Youth Soccer³³

16. AIFF director slams Indian failings³⁴:

“There is no national team training centre, no elite academies, no budget as far as implementing the Lakshya 2022 project is concerned,” Baan said at the ‘Indian Football Convention Goal-13. ‘Lakshya 2022’³⁵ aims to help India qualify for the World Cup in 2022.

³⁰ <http://www.fifa.com/aboutfifa/news/newsid=1787676/index.html>

³¹ http://gfdc.in/?page_id=1767

³² <http://www.fifa.com/associations/association=ind/index.html>

³³ <http://www.indiayouthsoccer.com>

³⁴ <http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2013/02/16/aiff-director-slams-indian-failings/>

³⁵ <http://www.indiansportsnews.com/hot-picks/17171-india-set-sight-on-qualifying-for-2022-qatar-olympics.html>



A few facts: India, Indian football players, football clubs etc.

1. Mohun Bagan Athletic Club is an Indian I-League football club based in Kolkata, West Bengal. It is one of the oldest football clubs in Asia, having been established in 1889. Mohun Bagan won its first trophy in 1904 when they won Coochbehar Cup. Mohun Bagan then created history by becoming the first Indian club to win the IFA Shield when they won it in 1911 against East Yorkshire Regiment by defeating them 2–1 despite the Mohun Bagan players playing in barefoot while East Yorkshire Regiment played with proper footballing equipment. In 1943 Mohun Bagan created history in Indian football by being the first team to implement an Insurance Scheme for the medical aid of the injured players³⁶.
2. In the FIFA/Coca-Cola world ranking of 2012 The "Men in Blue" from India ranked 166th in the ranking ladder. In April 2013 India has climbed up a few places and is ranked in the 149th place. The highest ranking for India was in February 1996 when it climbed to the 94th place. The lowest ranking was in September 2012 when it slipped to the 169th place³⁷.
3. Baichung Bhutia is one of the most acknowledged names in Indian football, he is also the captain of the Indian football team who played for Fulham and Aston Villa but didn't make the cut³⁸.
4. In July 2012, the Indian football team captain, Sunil Chetri, arrived in Portugal, exactly seven days after being signed by Sporting Clube de Portugal, popularly known as Sporting Lisbon³⁹. Chetri decided to return home on a loan deal with I-League favourites Churchill Brothers after spending just 46 minutes on field with the B team in the Liga de Honra, second division league, during his eight-month-long stay with the Portuguese club.
5. Arata Izumi becomes first foreign national to be selected for Indian football team. Born to an Indian father and Japanese mother, Arata had an Indian birth certificate, but he became a Japanese citizen after his parents separated⁴⁰.
6. The All India Football Federation [AIFF] has signed a two-year deal with Mr. Rob Baan as the new Technical Director of the AIFF. Mr. Baan would stay responsible for drafting an Indian Football Master plan. He was earlier involved in a similar capacity with the Australian Football Federation⁴¹. This deal with Mr. Rob Baan was signed by AIFF in co-operation with PSV and Philips⁴².

³⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohun_Bagan_A.C.

³⁷ <http://www.fifa.com/associations/association=ind/ranking/gender=m/index.html>

³⁸ <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/67251-baichung-bhutia-indian-footballs-pride>

³⁹ <http://www.thehindu.com/sport/football/chetri-arrives-in-portugal/article3632483.ece>

⁴⁰ <http://sports.ndtv.com/football/news/202674-arata-izumi-becomes-first-foreign-national-to-be-selected-for-indian-football-team>

⁴¹ <http://www.chrispd.de/wordpress/2011/10/12/rob-baan-appointed-aiff-technical-director>

⁴² <http://www.psv.nl/News/News-page/AIFF-appoints-Rob-Baan-as-Technical-Director.htm>



7. Soccerex: India Workshop speaks about Opportunities. The Soccerex European Forum 2012 was held in Manchester in March 2012 with leading figures of European and world football attending. India was on the Soccerex agenda with an 'Emerging Markets' workshop solely focusing on Indian football⁴³.
8. Why is India not at the World Cup⁴⁴?
9. Former legends blame AIFF for sorry state of Indian football. Afghanistan is two places above India [143] in the latest FIFA rankings⁴⁵.
10. Soccer fights for status in cricket-crazed India⁴⁶
11. In Cricket-Obsessed India, Soccer Soars in Popularity⁴⁷
12. In India, Cricket vs. Soccer⁴⁸
13. India national football team⁴⁹
14. Indian I-League - India Soccer Live Scores⁵⁰
15. Football in India - a few videos⁵¹
16. Wim Koevermans takes Indian football to a new low⁵²
17. Ahsan Ali Syed is the owner of Real Racing Club de Santander, the football team of Spain Segunda Division who also tried to buy Blackburn football club⁵³.
18. India qualified by default for the 1950 FIFA World Cup finals as a result of the withdrawal of all of their scheduled opponents. Finally India also withdrew because they were not allowed to play barefoot⁵⁴.

⁴³ <http://www.arunfoot.blogspot.de/2012/03/soccerex-india-workshop-speaks-about.html?m=1>

⁴⁴ http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/soutikbiswas/2010/06/why_is_india_a_football_laggard.html

⁴⁵ http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-03-15/top-stories/37743417_1_fifa-rankings-indian-football-afc-challenge-cup

⁴⁶ <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/soccer-fights-status-cricket-crazed-india>

⁴⁷ <http://world.time.com/2012/07/04/in-cricket-obsessed-india-soccer-soars-in-popularity>

⁴⁸ <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2010/06/22/in-india-cricket-vs-soccer.html>

⁴⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India_national_football_team

⁵⁰ <http://www.flashscore.com/soccer/india>

⁵¹ <http://www.sportskeeda.com/football/india>

⁵² <http://www.goal.com/en-india/news/2292/editorials/2013/03/07/3803664/wim-koevermans-takes-indian-football-to-a-new-low>

⁵³ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-1367286/Racing-Santander-owner-Ahsan-Ali-Syed-spotlight--Pete-Jenson.html>

⁵⁴ http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/sports_blog/2011/07/did-india-withdraw-from-the-1950-world-cup-because-they-were-not-allowed-to-play-barefoot.html



Did you know?

1. Dr. Talimeren Ao (T.Ao), the Captain of the first Indian Olympic football team(barefooted) was from Mokokchung district, Assam [now in Nagaland] who studied at Jorhat and Guwahati and who was a medical doctor. The team participated in London Olympic in 1948 and they beat France 2-1. The Indian footballers' bravery and brilliance in bare feet at the 1948 Olympics earned them no less a fan than Princess Margaret, the younger sister of the then and still-reigning Queen Elizabeth II⁵⁵.
2. Mahatma Gandhi, the anti-violence pioneer who led India into independence, used football to help break racial barriers in South Africa and social ones in his homeland⁵⁶.
3. Salien Manna was the only Asian to ever make the list of the world's ten best captains in the English FA's celebrated football yearbook⁵⁶.
4. India were the dominant force in international football's infancy in Asia; and the East Bengal-Mohun Bagan clash once boasted a stupefying attendance of 130,000 fans, and regularly attracts crowds of between 80,000 and 105,000⁵⁶.

⁵⁵ http://www.kolkatafootball.com/meghalaya_tournament_2013/index.html

⁵⁶ <http://www.fifa.com/worldfootball/news/newsid=1692684.html>

