



**Sports and Youth Services, Department  
Government of Odisha**

**Odisha bets big on Football with focus on grassroots to elite**

**Bhubaneswar, 5 September 2020:** After field Hockey that has showcased Odisha's sporting prowess to the world, the State is now also looking at Football to be an added game changer. While hosting the ISL Hero Cup seeded the thought, the Football High Performance Centre with AIFF (National teams homebased here), launch of Odisha FC and winning the hosting rights for the FIFA U 17 Women's World Cup 2021 have been apt steps for the government to create an ecosystem to take that dream forward and promote football from grassroots to elite, shared Director Sports, Odisha, R Vineel Krishna while speaking at a Webinar on "The Evolution of Indian Football"

While world class infrastructure is being developed for this FIFA U17 WWC 2021, Odisha is also developing a pathway from grassroots to elite for producing talented footballers.

With women football gaining global recognition, Odisha is developing programs to induct more women into Football. Elaborating on this, Director Sports said, "Odisha has a rich past of women footballers from the State representing India. Even the current pool is very talented, with girls bagging bronze and silver medals in Khelo India Youth Games, Guwahati in the U21 and U17 categories respectively. Our focus is to build on this area of strength on the women's football front. Developing a strong legacy program in the State as part of hosting the World Cup is being worked on priority too."

To increase the sport's popularity reach and participation, the State, phase wise, will be setting up football corners in schools and public parks across Odisha with provision of footballs, equipment, and coaching. Engaging AIFF E-license coaches

at these football corners will add new possibilities for the players with promising talent. Hosting Football competitions in the State in a phased-manner across different age categories for both boys and girls is also being chalked.

Football has a mass appeal and rural talent will be tapped in. Elaborating on the initiatives Mr. Krishna said, “To complement our residential Sports Hostel coaching program, we will also have day coaching programs for younger age categories to broad-base the talent pool. Within the residential program too, there will be restructuring to have a progressive, age-appropriate pathway for youth footballers (U13, U15 and U18) with a strong curriculum, a better technical staff to support the development of the youth teams. This upgradation will be for both boys and girls. We are considering roping in AIFF as technical partners to run the Football Sports Hostels.”

Odisha FC youth program will also be available to the talented youth of Odisha which adds to the aspirational goal for young footballers to make it to the team of Odisha FC and play in the ISL. They can also find a spot in the Indian U17 and U19 teams which are based in Odisha.

Odisha FC also intends to have a team in the Indian Women League soon, which is the biggest club competition in the country for women, and that becomes an aspirational target for the women footballers in the State.

We are looking to strengthen in all the key areas of the football development pyramid and our goal is to turn Odisha into a big talent producing state for Football, which is a passionately followed sport in the State and the Country, Krishna signed off.