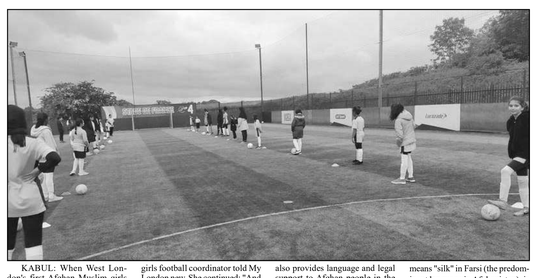
'First' Afghan and Muslim girls football team launched in West London



KABUL: When West London's first Afghan Muslim girls football team launched this year, it was on the back of local girls who wanted to get more involved in sport.

Abresham FC, born out of West London charity the Afghanistan and Central Asian Association in Feltham came into fruition after girls in the charity's supplementary school requested a sports club.

Now two months after launching as a football team, Abresham FC, also backed by Comic Relief, has over 50 registered participants aged eight to 16-years-old.

"We want to increase the visibility of Muslim girls in sport," Alice Bletsoe, 24, the charity's girls football coordinator told My London new. She continued: "And not just Muslim girls but girls in general.

"There is massive under representation of girls in sport but by creating a squad and developing their skills and helping them be as good as they can be, it may encourage other girls to do the same.

"There's a large Afghan community in West London and Feltham particularly."

The West London boroughs of Ealing, Hounslow and Hillingdon have the largest populations of Afghan people in London with the capital forming 60 per cent of the UK's Afghan population.

Alice said the Afghanistan and Central Asian Association, which also provides language and legal support to Afghan people in the area, want to use the team to support young girls in the community develop skills in sport and also meet other Afghan and Muslim families in the area.

" The girls really enjoy it and t he parents are really supportive," Alice said.

She added: "Sometimes the parents are more encouraging than the daughters, they're like 'come on we're playing football.' When its sunny the parents stay and support which is nice.

"One of the aims is to get a squad playing in leagues, that would be a dream."

Having only started in April following easing of lockdown restrictions, Abresham FC, which means "silk" in Farsi (the predominant language in Afghanistan), is yet to feature in any leagues just yet.

Alice said one of the biggest challenges for the team has been getting older girls in the area to join the team as well as finding female football coaches.

In spite of the challenges Alice said the team continues to push on with support from the Afghanistan and Central Asian Association and the local community.

Abresham FC recently held its first football tournament attended by families and community YouTube channel, Abresham TV.

Monitoring Desk

Harry Kane: England striker faces 'repetitive cycle' of criticism, says Gareth Southgate

England manager Gareth Southgate has dismissed questions over Harry Kane's form, claiming his captain faces a "repetitive cycle" of criticism that he "inevitably" comes through.

Kane has been substituted in England's first two Euro 2020 group-stage fixtures, with the Spurs striker's sub-par performances leading to Southgate facing questions over whether he would consider dropping him.

The England boss made an exception to his usual approach in confirming on Sunday that he will stick with Kane for Tuesday's clash with the Czech Republic at Wembley, and further explained his decision at a pre-match press conference on Monday.

"I think the only thing that's relevant is what I've said already this week," Southgate said. "His importance to the team - he's been our best player, our most influential player, our most important player for a long period of time.

"Of course there's been moments where the likes of Raheem (Sterling) have probably had periods where he's been critical for our success as well in terms the goalscoring, but Harry has consistently been our top goalscorer, his record since I've been in charge is phenomenal and he's a hugely important figure for us.

"I think it's the world of a big player. Throughout the time I've been England manager I must have managed these sorts of questions about Harry in three or four different periods of time, and inevitably he's come through those periods and scored important goals for us and played exceptionally well. So it's a bit of a repetitive cycle."

Kane, who was both the top scorer and provider of assists in the Premier League last season, is also the subject of a major transfer saga, with news of a £100m bid from Manchester City having emerged on Monday.

"The big players have big focus, have a lot more attention, and their world is far more complicated than a lot of other players who can go under that radar of pressure and intensity," Southgate said.

"So I've got a huge understanding of how that is for Harry, a huge understanding of having played with big personalities, big players how their world is different and hopefully that helps me to manage him and get the best out of him, which over a long period of time I think we have done."

England are going into Tuesday's clash with the Czech Republic facing disruption after Mason Mount and Ben Chilwell were forced into self-isolation on Monday as a result of their contact with Scotland midfielder Billy Gilmour following Friday's 0-0 draw. The result left England with four points from their opening two games but needing to beat the Czechs to ensure top spot in Group D.

The situation could see Southgate make changes to his side, with two candidates for selection being Harry Maguire and Jordan Henderson, who have yet to feature in the tournament as they recover from injuries.

Manchester United captain Maguire has not played since May 9 because of an ankle injury, while Liverpool skipper Henderson had not played for four months until featuring for 45 minutes in England's warm-up match against Romania earlier this month.

"Slightly different situations given the length of time they've missed, but both are training very well and both will be involved tomorrow (Tuesday), so we're happy with their progress," Southgate said.

"They've already, without being on the pitch, had a massive impact around the training sessions, around the squad, so I couldn't be happier with the way our playing group and the senior players, in particular, the influence they've had and the impact they've had.

"But of course they want to get on the pitch and we're hoping that they can play a big part in this tournament still for us."

Help avoid COVID, injury as kids return to sports

As pandemic restrictions ease and young athletes once again take to fields, courts, tracks, and rinks, doctors are sharing ways to help them get back to sports safely.

That means taking steps to prevent COVID-19.

It also means trying to avoid sports-related injuries, which may be more likely if young athletes didn't move around so much during the pandemic.

"The AAP encourages all people who are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it is available," the organization wrote in updated guidance on returning to sports and physical activity.

"I don't think it can be overemphasized how important these vaccines are, both for the individual and at the community level," says Aaron L. Baggish, MD, an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and director of the Cardiovascular Performance Program at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

Baggish, team cardiologist for the New England Patriots, the Boston Bruins, the New England Revolution, U.S. Men's and Women's Soccer, and U.S. Rowing, as well as medical director for the Boston Marathon, has studied the effects of COVID-19 on the heart in college athletes and written return-to-play recommendations for athletes of high school age and older.

"Millions of people have received these vaccines from age 12 up," Baggish says. "The efficacy continues to look very durable and near complete, and the risk associated with vaccination is incredibly low, to the point where the risk-benefit ratio across the age spectrum, whether you're athletic or not, strongly favors getting vaccinated. There is really no reason to hold off at this point."

While outdoor activities are lower-risk for spreading COVID-19 and many people have been vaccinated, masks still should be worn in certain settings, the AAP notes.

"Indoor spaces that are crowded are still high-risk for COVID-19 transmisssion. And we recognize that not everyone in these settings may be vaccinated," says Susannah Briskin, MD, lead author of the AAP guidance.

"So for indoor sporting events with spectators, in locker rooms or other small spaces such as a training room, and during shared car rides or school transportation to and from events, individuals should continue to mask," adds Briskin, a pediatrician in the Division of Sports Medicine and fellowship director for the Primary Care Sports Medicine program at University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital.

For outdoor sports, athletes who are not fully vaccinated should be encouraged to wear masks on the sidelines and during group training and competition when they are within 3 feet of others for sustained amounts of time, according to the AAP.

In general, athletes who have not been active for more than a month should resume exercise gradually, Briskin says. Starting at 25% of normal volume and increasing slowly over time -- with 10% increases each week -- is one rule of thumb.

"Those who have taken a prolonged break from sports are at a higher risk of injury when they return," she notes. "Families should also be aware of an increased risk for heat-related illness if they are not acclimated."

Caitlyn Mooney, MD, a team doctor for the University of Texas at San Antonio, has heard reports of doctors seeing more injuries like stress fractures. Some cases may relate to people going from "months of doing nothing to all of a sudden going back to sports," says Mooney, who is also a clinical assistant professor of pediatrics and orthopedics at UT Health San Antonio.

"The coaches, the parents, and the athletes themselves really need to keep in mind that it's not like a regular season," Mooney says. She suggests gradually ramping up activity and paying attention to any pain. "That's a good indicator that maybe you're going too fast," she adds.

Athletes should be mindful of other symptoms too when restarting exercise, especially after illness.

It is "very important that any athlete with recent COVID-19 monitor for new symptoms when they return to exercise," says Jonathan Drezner, MD, a professor of family medicine at the University of Washington in Seattle. "A little fatigue from detraining may be expected, but exertional chest pain deserves more evaluation."

Drezner -- editor-in-chief of the British Journal of Sports Medicine and team doctor for the Seattle Seahawks -- along with Baggish and colleagues, found a low prevalence of cardiac involvement in a study of more than 3,000 college athletes with prior SARS-CoV-2 infection.

"Any athlete, despite their initial symptom course, who has cardiopulmonary symptoms on return to exercise, particularly chest pain, should see their physician for a comprehensive cardiac evaluation," Drezner says. "Cardiac MRI should be reserved for athletes with abnormal testing or when clinical suspicion of myocardial involvement is high."

If an athlete had COVID-19 with moderate symptoms (such as fever, chills, or a flu-like syndrome) or cardiopulmonary symptoms (such as chest pain or shortness of breath), cardiac testing should be considered, he notes.

These symptoms "were associated with a higher prevalence of cardiac involvement," Drezner said in an email.

Chris Paul listed as out for Game 2 of Suns vs. Clippers in WCF

Phoenix Suns point guard Chris Paul (health and safety protocols) is listed as out on the team's injury report for Game 2 of the Western Conference Finals against the Los Angeles Clippers.

On Wednesday, it was revealed that Paul was placed in the league's protocols. Paul tested positive for COVID-19 despite taking the Pfizer vaccine in February, according to Arizona Sports' John Gambadoro.

Yahoo! Sports' Chris Haynes reported after Phoenix's Game 1 win over the Clippers on Sunday that Paul was asymptomatic, which could allow him to clear the health and safety protocols sooner.

Without Paul in Game 1, the Suns beat the Clippers 120-114. Los Angeles was missing forward Kawhi Leonard, who also remains out for Game 2. Phoenix has won eight straight games in the playoffs.

Paul this postseason is averaging 15.7 points, 4.1 rebounds and 8.7 assists per game. He was named to Second Team All-NBA and finished fifth in MVP balloting. arizonasports

Women's Cricket returns to the Caribbean as Pakistan tour of West Indies announced

The five-match ODI series will form part of a vital preparation for the two teams as they will face each other in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifiers that are due to take place in Sri Lanka in December for one of the three remaining qualifying spots to secure a seat at the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup in New Zealand, 2022.

The West Indies Women's team will play at home after a gap of nineteen months due to the impact of Covid-19. They last played in the Caribbean in a bilateral series against India in November 2019 where they were handed a clinical 5-0 defeat.

The Cricket West Indies Director, Jimmy Adams laid emphasis on the grander scheme of things as the focus now is on the road to the 2022 Cricket World Cup.

"This is a very significant home tour for our women and we are delighted that our counterparts at the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) have worked with us to arrange these two series despite all the challenges we face with COVID-19. West Indies continues to invest in our international Women's program by hosting extended High-Performance camps between tours, two of which have already been held this year," said Adams.

"The series is also an important part of our preparation for the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifiers in December. Our goal post this Pakistan series, is to have our squad play against more international opposition and take part in our Regional Tournament before heading to the Qualifiers in Sri Lanka at the end of the year," added Adams.

ICC