



# COACHES CIRCLE

KEEPING COACHES IN ASIA UP TO DATE WITH TECHNICAL NEWS AND DEVELOPMENTS



THE BIG INTERVIEW WITH ►  
**HAJIME MORIYASU**

**ISSUE 6**  
**MAY 2021**

## LEGACY

Andy Roxburgh, AFC Technical Director

Said Al Owairan, Hidetoshi Nakata and Park Ji-sung were trailblazers for international football on the Asian continent.

When Saudi Arabia's Al Owairan scored the winning goal against Belgium following a brilliant solo run in the 1994 FIFA World Cup in Washington, USA, Saudi youngsters were challenged to replicate his achievement, his moment of brilliance. Nakata, the poster-boy of Japanese football around the turn of the century, contributed massively to the Samurai Blues' success at the 2002 World Cup, while a young, talented Park Ji-sung brought attacking quality and energy to a Korea Republic side on its way to a top-four finish in the same FIFA tournament.

These legendary Asian players paved a trail for others to follow, underlining that an event, a team performance or an individual player can inspire the next generation.

Just before man landed on the moon for the first time, Germany's Detmar Cramer, a gifted football teacher and emerging star of the coaching world, took on the role of Japan Football Association (JFA) Technical Director and helped to build the foundations of modern football in Japan. He also contributed to the country's third place finish at the Mexico Olympic Games in 1968; at the time, an achievement well beyond the expectations of anyone from 'the land of the rising sun'.



Saudi Arabia's Al Owairan bypasses Belgium's Rudy Smidts to score an historic goal at the FIFA World Cup, 29 June 1994.

In 2005, Detmar was inducted into the JFA Hall of Fame for the cultural legacy that he delivered as a coach educator and football developer. He affected people's lives like someone who plants trees that they will never live to sit under.

Sometimes that legacy is not something that is left to someone, but something that is left in someone.

The latter is the case when Rinus Michels, the Dutch coaching guru and FIFA Coach of the 20th Century, implanted his 'total-football' concept into the mind of his star player Johan Cruyff. An icon of FC Barcelona and the Netherlands, Cruyff flourished as a coach and expanded on his boss' brainchild. In turn, he bewitched



Japan and Parma midfielder Hidetoshi Nakata fights for the ball during an Italian first league match against Lazio, 10 November 2002.

his player/pupil Pep Guardiola, who once said: "I knew nothing about football before knowing Cruyff." Both Rinus Michels and Johan Cruyff transformed football, and their legacy is recognised and honoured. Pep Guardiola is still on his journey, leaving footprints which others will no doubt try to emulate or use as a stimulus for further innovation.

Those who tutor aspiring coaches have an enormous responsibility for pointing their students in the right direction. As Sir Alex Ferguson, the legendary manager of Manchester United, once proclaimed: "There's a lot to be said for either picking or being lucky enough to land the right mentor. The best ones can change your life."



With this in mind, it is important that visiting tutors, from Europe or Asia, make an effort to nurture the local coach educators, to tutor the tutors, and not just conduct a one-off coaching course. They need to leave a legacy. As the old adage says, 'give someone a fish and you feed them for a day; teach them to fish and you feed them for a lifetime'.

Someone who understands the value of leaving something behind is Al Sadd's Head Coach Xavi, the former FC Barcelona midfield maestro and Spanish World Cup winner. In a coaching sense, he could be the next link in the Michels-Cruyff-Guardiola chain of inspiration. Like the trio he follows, Xavi has the capacity to teach well and to say profound things, such as: "In football, the result is an imposter. You can do things really, really well but not win. There is something greater than the result, more lasting – legacy".

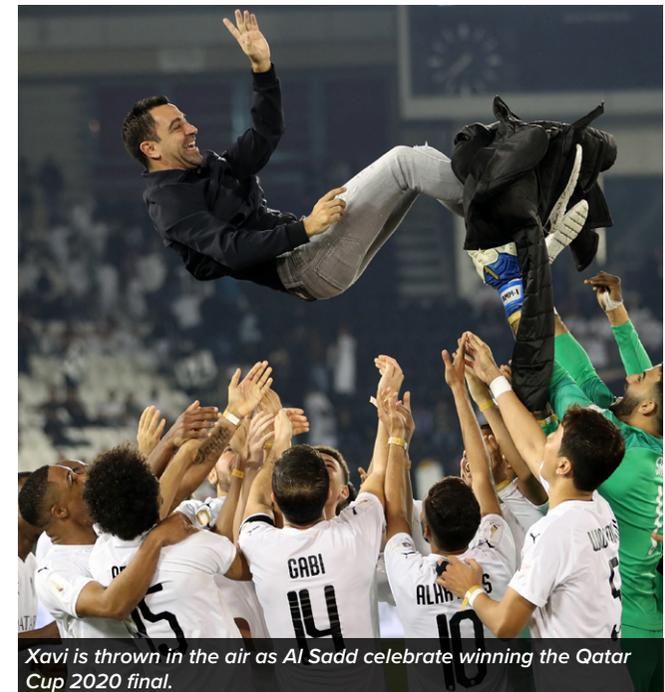
Said Al Owairan, Nakata, Park Ji-sung and their teammates inspired the next generation to dream. Pioneer coaches such as Detmar Cramer, Rinus Michels and Johan Cruyff built the foundations for others to embrace and explore. Some gifted followers have improved on the original themes, like jazz pianists, in an effort to raise the quality of their methods and consequently the standard of the game.

Those involved in football education and player development need to remember the old line, 'I touch the future, I teach.' They need to leave something behind that can have a positive, inspiring impact on the next batch of young players and coaches. The ultimate aim for football's trailblazers is to leave a lasting legacy.

“ There is something greater than the result, more lasting – legacy.

**Xavi**

*Al Sadd Head Coach  
Spanish World Cup winner*



## INHERITANCE FROM THE PAST PLUS CONSTANT DEVELOPMENT

As a controlling midfielder, he played the role of the unsung hero, working hard in the engine room to link defence with attack. Between 1987 and 2001, he totalled 271 appearances for Sanfrecce Hiroshima before hanging up his boots at Vegalta Sendai. Dutch coach Hans Ooft, who later took him on loan to Kyoto Purple Sanga in 1998, drafted him into Japan's national team in 1992; here, a tally of 35 caps included a match that left long-lasting scars inflicted by an injury-time equaliser scored by Iraq in the game labelled as 'The Agony of Doha'. The 2-2 draw dashed dreams of participating, for the first time, in the 1994 FIFA World Cup.

Switching to coaching, he won three J-League titles with Sanfrecce Hiroshima, earning three Manager of the Year awards in the process. Meanwhile, he had tasted national team football as a coach at the AFC Youth Championship in 2006, plus the FIFA U20 World Cup a year later. After going to the 2018 FIFA World Cup as assistant to Akira Nishino, he stepped up when the latter stepped down, and promptly led Japan to finish as runners-up at the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019. To readers in Japan, his nickname of Poichi might be enough to identify him. But, to the football world at large, he is, of course ...



HAJIME MORIYASU

## 1 FIRST OF ALL, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS A PLAYER, RATHER THAN COACH?

I would describe myself as the type of player who works hard to make the team better and more effective. The kind of player who shines when the team works, rather than being flashy as an individual. I aimed to be a sort of lubricant that helps to connect people on and off the pitch, as well as the link between attack and defence on the field of play. I believe that this is what helps to promote a creative and productive group.



Hajime Moriyasu chases the ball in a friendly match between Argentina and Japanese first division side Vegalta Sendai, May 2002.

## 2 WHEN YOU WERE PLAYING FOR SANFRECCE HIROSHIMA, WERE YOU ALREADY THINKING ABOUT BECOMING A COACH?

I think I had a vague idea of becoming a coach when I was a player. But it might be more appropriate to say that I wished to give something back to the club that developed me as a player. You know, since my early days at Mazda, before I joined Sanfrecce, I have always kept daily training notes just like a diary. I drew diagrams of all the training sessions and also wrote down the key elements of each one, picking out what I felt was important. I think this habit led me towards becoming a coach and it is still a great asset for me today.

## 3 WERE THERE ANY BIG INFLUENCES ON THE WAY YOU VIEWED THE GAME – DURING YOUR PLAYING DAYS AND LATER WHEN YOU BECAME A COACH?

I have to start with the event that had the biggest impact on me – the so-called ‘Agony of Doha’ in 1993. I was on the verge of catching a dream and failed to do so. The disappointment was unimaginable. But I think it gave me the strength to overcome any adversity, because I recognised that nothing would ever be as hard to handle as that was.

In terms of the people who have had a big influence on me, I have had the opportunity to work, as a player or as an assistant coach, with many different types of coaches, and all of them have contributed to making me the person I am today. Hans Ooft taught me about



Sanfrecce Hiroshima head coach Hajime Moriyasu watches on during the 2012 Club World Cup Quarter-final against Al-Ahly of Egypt.

the role of football in life as well as skills and the importance of having fun even in a very intense and demanding environment. Stuart Baxter taught me about the importance of discipline and playing in an organised way. Wim Jansen's approach was the other way round. Individual responsibility was the key to success and individual strengths created organisational dynamics within the team. At Sendai, Hidehiko Shimizu showed me how to manage even the most mischievous talents and how to make them more effective for the team by communicating with them.

After I became a coach, Takeshi Ono taught me the importance of preparing with the whole staff in order to develop the team. Zeljko Petrović also inspired me a lot with his idea of football always starting with ‘my ball’. So,

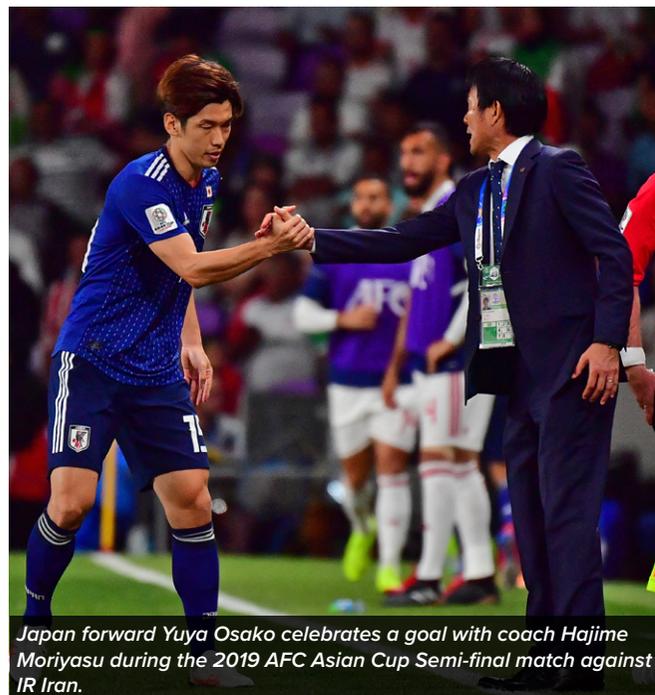
I have been influenced by the passions and approaches from some really different types of coach – not just one person. I've been able to absorb all this into my own career and it has been a great asset.

## 4 WHEN YOU TOOK OVER THE NATIONAL TEAM, DID YOU MAKE ANY IMPORTANT CHANGES?

I have always had a strong desire to improve the team, but I don't think I have made any major changes. I think that a team is a series of inheritances from the past and a constant development on top of that. I believe that Akira Nishino developed the team greatly and then passed the baton to me. I also feel that it was for this reason that he brought me in as an assistant coach to the Japanese national team. Apart from the World Cup held in Japan, the only national teams to reach a Round of 16 so far have been those coached by Nishino and Takeshi Okada, who both built teams and brought out the best of what Japan had to offer. However, we still could not reach the Quarter-finals. So, our aim is to break through that Round of 16 barrier by building on the achievements and development work of those two coaches. And then the team's baton will be passed to the next leader.

## 5 AS THE JFA'S OLYMPIC COACH FOR THE MEN'S TEAM, WHAT ARE YOUR AIMS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE TOKYO GAMES?

I keep saying to myself that our goal is to win the gold medal. We would like to please all the people who support us and, as a consequence, we would like to



Japan forward Yuya Osako celebrates a goal with coach Hajime Moriyasu during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup Semi-final match against IR Iran.

add the value of our players and the value of Japanese football. Adding value means two things. The first is that by achieving results, we would encourage the world to recognise Japanese football. And the other is that the Olympics, especially in Japan, attract a lot of attention from the general public – including people who are not normally involved in football or sport. This means a great opportunity to increase the value of football and the number of people playing the game. If the numbers increase, there will be more chances to develop outstanding players, and if the popularity of football increases, it will help football to take root as a genuine culture in society. This is what I hope to achieve.



Japan celebrates during its AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 Round of 16 victory over Saudi Arabia.

## 6 WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES YOU ARE FACING WITH REGARD TO THE FIFA WORLD CUP QUALIFYING COMPETITION FOR QATAR 2022?

The first thing is to do our best to qualify. But the coronavirus pandemic is not over yet and there is only a limited number of activities we can do. In this context, it is of the utmost importance to keep a close eye on the scouting of players with potential. There are more than 50 players involved in our national team, both in Japan and abroad, and the coaching staff are divided into groups

to collect information on the players, including field and video visits. It is also important to assess the condition of the players as well as their abilities. And we need to have a good understanding of the players' potential, not only at current stage, but also prospectively. As far as this year is concerned, our team activities may be limited, but we will be working vertically to improve the core group of players, and also horizontally to develop and increase the number of players with potential, so that we are fully prepared for the qualifying campaign.

## 7 FOR YOU, WHAT ARE THE MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COACHING A CLUB AND A NATIONAL TEAM?

To put it simply, I think it's a difference in preparation time frames. At the club, I was able to spend time with the players on the pitch every day to develop them and consolidate the team. However, in the national team, it often happens that the players get together two days

“Working with the youth teams gave me the opportunity to touch what they do on a daily basis and gave me a strong awareness of national team realities, which are built on the hard work of the youth coaches.”

before the match and we only have one team training session. Even in this situation, we have to make sure that we develop our team to the best of our ability and that we are able to adjust our play according to the opponents. This is where ingenuity and staff work come into play. When I was on the pitch with the players day in day out, I might have felt more room to enjoy myself, but now I feel that I have the satisfaction of being able to perform on my country's behalf. So, both jobs are greatly challenging and rewarding.

## 8 HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE OF MANAGEMENT?

The only thing that is clear is that my management style is neither stately nor flashy. I would like to think of myself as a leader who would like to move forward by working hard together. You might say I'm a bit like a sheepdog, showing them where to go! Of course, I take responsibility for the decisions I have to make, but my style is to encourage and motivate the players and the staff to work hard, to work together and to do something that is genuinely worthwhile.

## 9 HOW VALUABLE WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH JAPAN'S NATIONAL YOUTH TEAM TO YOUR COACHING CAREER?

Although most of my career has been spent coaching senior professional players, coaching the U20 national team as assistant coach and being involved in the FIFA U20 World Cup in Canada in 2007 was a huge experience. The first thing I noticed was the reaction of



Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu and Vietnam coach Park Hang-seo greet each other before their teams clash at the AFC Asian Cup 2019.

the players. Unlike the senior players, who have already established their own style of football, the young players responded immediately to our coaching and developed very quickly. On the other hand, it was an experience that made me feel a strong sense of responsibility as a coach. Another thing is that I have formed a very strong bond with the coaches of the young age groups. Working with the youth teams gave me the opportunity to touch what they do on a daily basis and gave me a strong awareness of national team realities, which are built on the hard work of the youth coaches. I believe that this appreciation and that bond have served me well to this day.

## 10 IN YOUR VIEW, WHAT DOES ASIA NEED TO DO TO CLOSE THE GAP WITH EUROPE AND SOUTH AMERICA?

The most advanced football in the world is played in a context of very high intensity and quality combination play, so in order to catch up with Europe and South America, it is essential to match that intensity. I think there are two things that could contribute to this objective. One is greater experience of playing against European and South American teams at a high level. This is so important for us both as a team and as individuals. As a team we need to have more opportunities to play against them, and I feel that we must be equipped to compete well especially on away pitches. This feeling stems from our experience of play last autumn in Europe. I think it is also important for us as individuals to send players to Europe to improve their play, in competitions such as in the Champions League or the Europa League.

The other thing is to raise the standard throughout Asia. With the start of the Nations' League in Europe, it is gradually becoming more difficult to play against European and South American teams even on FIFA's international matchdays. If that is the case, the more we can play each other at a higher level in Asia, the more we can improve. Of course, in order to achieve this, it is essential to improve the domestic leagues in each Member Association within AFC. In the long term, that is all about youth development and coach education. In the short term, the intensity of domestic leagues is an issue that needs to be addressed. I think the key to catching up is to think about both the opportunities to play against Europe and South America, and the

improvement of Asia as a whole by improving the competitiveness of our domestic competitions.

## 11 WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNG COACHES TODAY, IN PARTICULAR THOSE WORKING AT YOUTH LEVEL?

The most important thing for us as football coaches is to stimulate players to enjoy playing football and that they develop with that idea as the core theme. That is why I would like to encourage the coaches of youth teams to develop players who really love the game of football. I'm working with the national team now and I like to think that the national players are also the ones who love football the most. Also, it's important to believe that growing and developing as a human being will ultimately lead to development in football. I believe that if we can encourage human development, then the players will be able to overcome any difficulties or obstacles and



Japan reached the AFC Asian Cup Final for the fifth time in 2019, eventually going down 1-3 to Qatar.

develop by exploiting their own strengths. I believe that this kind of player will enjoy playing football all their lives, even when they grow older.

From the point of view of becoming a national team player, I think that the pursuit of high intensity is one of the most important factors. This is why I would like the coaches to respect the children's desire to score goals and to take the ball away from the opponents. It is also important that they learn the fundamentals and at the same time respect the personality of the player, so that they can be happy in the game. Young players are the treasure of the football world. I always have utmost respect for the coaches who work with young players because they are the ones who make the football world a better place.

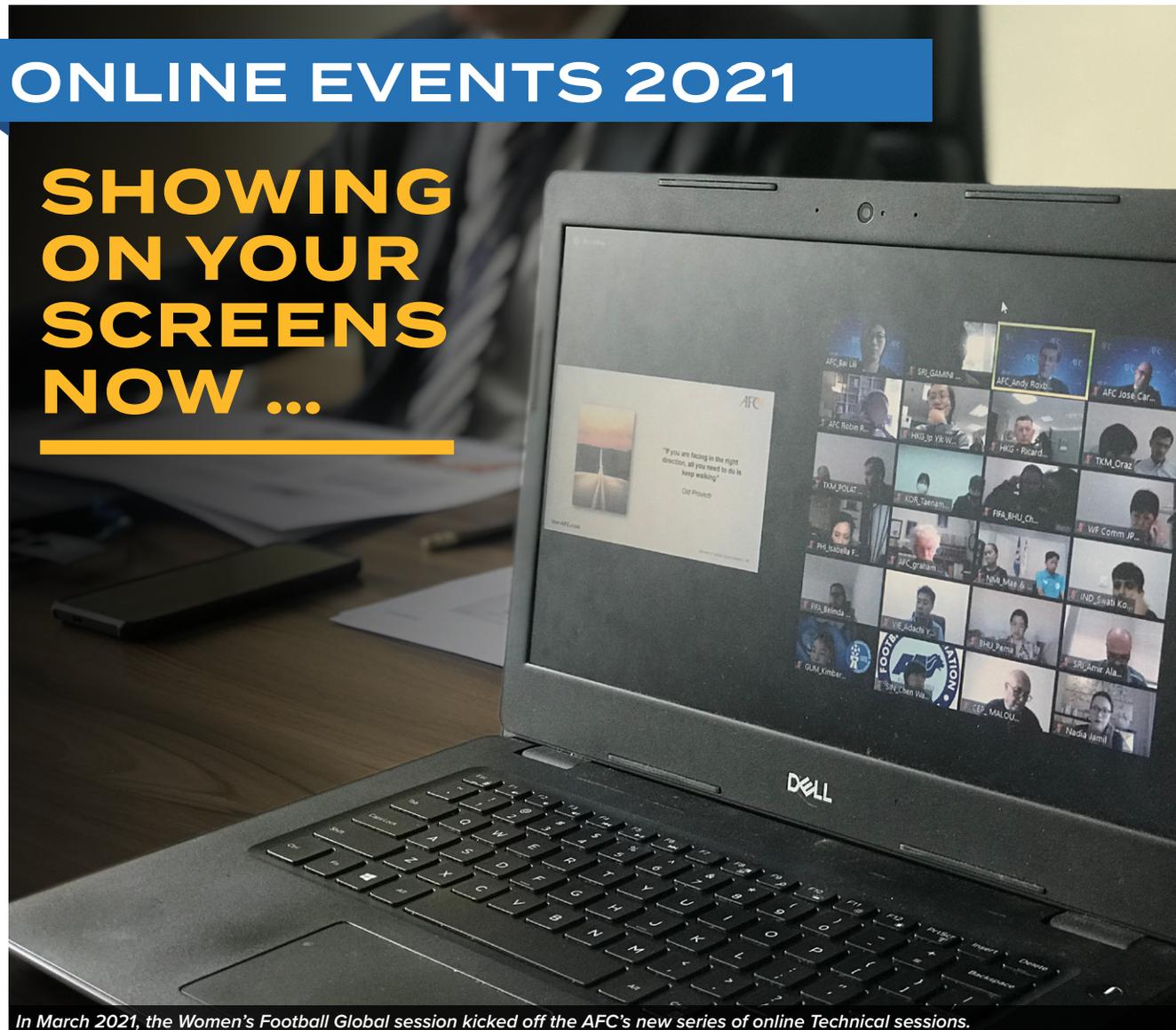
## 12 IS THERE ANYTHING IN FOOTBALL THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE?

I would like to see more and more players from Japan having the chance to play in Europe. I believe that when not only players but also coaches are able to participate in those competitions, we will be much closer to our dream. I am confident that this is a pathway that we will be able to develop.

The other thing is to win the FIFA World Cup. The fact is that the champions of the World Cup have only come from Europe and South America and the reason for this is quite simple. They have been through the toughest continental qualifying rounds, where it's life or death. I believe that if Asian countries, including ourselves, continue to work hard to pursue the dream of becoming champions, this dream of the AFC Family winning the trophy will become a reality.

## ONLINE EVENTS 2021

SHOWING  
ON YOUR  
SCREENS  
NOW ...



In March 2021, the Women's Football Global session kicked off the AFC's new series of online Technical sessions.

“Evolving. Always evolving. The game changes. The world changes. People are changing and the way we interact is changing.”

Readers with prodigious memories might recognise the comment culled from the interview with Ange Postecoglou in our previous issue. The last sentence is particularly pertinent at a time when the world is wading deep into a second year of COVID-induced abnormality. At the AFC, a major concern has been that the pandemic erected a barrier to interaction with and between our Member Associations. Conferences, workshops, seminars and even committee, panel and working group meetings have become unviable. Well, almost.

Nothing can match face-to-face interaction around a table. Nor the networking and interchanging of ideas outside the meeting room. Fortunately, there is a second-best solution: to conduct the events online. The only viable pathway has been a transition, to put it simply, from seminar to webinar. The result has been a dozen online sessions built on the four pillars of AFC's Technical Development objectives: Coach Education; Women's Football; Grassroots Football; and Youth Development.

In each case, the kick-off was a two-hour global session open to all Member Associations and hosted from the AFC's headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, where the IT crew deserve a huge round of applause. After each global opener, two further sessions of 90 minutes apiece were designed for specific focus groups, colour-coded blue and green. The Blues were the benchmark MAs – the associations more advanced in that particular sector. The Greens were the growth MAs – the ones working through earlier stages of development. But one thing was made clear: the Blue and Green sessions were not

exclusive. All MAs were welcome to join in. This was all about keeping doors open, not closing them.

To illustrate the differences between Blue and Green menus, here are a few tasters. The Blue session on women's football focused on professional league football and coaching a national youth squad; the Green group discussed ways of attracting girls into grassroots football. In Coach Education, Blue was about the delivery of Pro Licence courses; Green looked at the role of the tutor and the implementation of the AFC 'C Diploma'. In the Grassroots programme, Blue addressed the issue of extending football further into the syllabus of schools and colleges; the Greens centred their attention on children's football and small-sided games. And, in the Youth Development section, Blue took an in-depth look at three-star academies and the art of coaching a national youth squad; the main topic in the Green session was the development of elite youth players in smaller countries.

The online sessions were scheduled during a period from mid-March to early June 2021 – which means that, at the time of writing, they were very much a work in progress. But some sampling from the first two global events might help to set the scene.

### WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

The programme got off to an excellent start, with the second half of the two-hour session on Women's Football featuring Kayleigh Grieve, women's football marketing manager at UEFA. At first glance, her speciality might not appear to interlock with coaching perspectives. But her review of the rapid – not to say explosive – development of women's football in Europe, the continent that supplied seven of the top eight teams at the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2019, showcased the fact that governments, local or regional

THE COMMON VISCIOSUS CYCLE OF WOMEN'S SPORT



Kayleigh Grieve, Women's Football Marketing Manager at UEFA, provided insight into the rapid development of the women's game in Europe.



authorities and high-profile commercial organisations are increasingly willing to engage in a sport which is right at the top of the list of the world's fastest-growing disciplines, while FIFA is doubling investments and prize money, in addition to promoting club competitions and upgrading the World Cup to 32 teams. All of which translates into opportunities and challenges for coaches, tutors and community leaders.

This interlocked with the first half of the event in which AFC's head of women's football, Bai Lili, teamed up with technical director Andy Roxburgh to review strategic steps to be taken in the near and longer-term future with a view to seeing Asian club and national teams competing successfully at the highest level. The basic step is to grow the grassroots – to attract young girls to the game of football and to offer them high standards of tutoring. Further up the ladder, one of the big issues to address is to establish Elite Youth Academies for female players – a component currently an acute scarcity among AFC members. All this, in turn, stimulates the upgrading of coaching and coach education, where women need to be encouraged to increase their levels of participation, without impacting

quality. MAs were invited to reflect on a number of potential solutions, such as whether women-only coaching courses are a viable proposition and whether more women could play roles as coach educators.

In the meantime, the AFC is continuing to finance an assistance programme for women's football and push forward plans to upgrade competitions. The AFC U20 and U17 national team competitions have been rebranded as Asian Cups rather than Championships, and the age groups have been adjusted from U16 and U19 to U17 and U20, though the format remains unchanged. A pilot AFC Women's Club Championship is scheduled for 2021 and 2022, while the AFC Women's Champions League will officially kick-off in 2023. In addition, the latest AFC Women's Club Licensing criteria appear in the 2021 edition of the AFC Club Licensing Regulations and have now been published on the AFC website.

It has to be said that the attendance figure at the inaugural online event signified a highly encouraging start to the programme aimed at re-establishing communications

between the AFC and the MAs. And the same could be said for the second global session, when anyone glancing at the foot of their screen might have noticed the attendance figure ticking up to 108 participants from Member Associations and from AFC itself. The red thread which ran through the event was the imminent publication of an upgraded AFC Coaching Convention.

## COACH EDUCATION

Andy Roxburgh, responsible for implanting a convention in Europe in 1998 and in Asia two decades later, commented: “Some of the legal terminology has been tidied up in the 2021 version and some of the language has been simplified. But the major innovations are the introduction of an AFC ‘C’ diploma, aimed primarily at the grassroots level, along with specialised ‘B’ and ‘A’ diplomas for Goalkeeper Coaches. An Elite Youth ‘A’ diploma is currently under development and these new branches will give us additional alignment with Europe and open up greater opportunities for international movement within the coaching profession.”

Apart from introducing the innovations, the event also allowed questions to be answered. Indeed, the Q&A session had to be curtailed simply because it overran the meeting’s time slot. One fundamental query was whether the Convention aims to implant uniformity. The answer was a categorical ‘no’, and, in point of fact, a chance to reiterate that the intention is exactly the opposite. Historically, there was a uniformity in that the AFC visited MAs to deliver centrally prepared coach education courses.

“What we have now represents a cultural change,” Andy Roxburgh commented, “because we are moving away from centralised imposition and encouraging the MAs to take responsibility for designing courses appropriate to their individual scenarios.” He harked back to his first visit to Italy’s National Technical Centre at Coverciano, where he was told “here we have no books. You have to write your own” – a concept which links up with a sentence pronounced by Japan’s national team coach Hajime Moriyasu in his interview on earlier pages of this publication.

“There is uniformity in the Convention,” Roxburgh added. “But it is uniformity of guidelines and uniformity of standards. Within that framework, MAs have the freedom to govern and take ownership of their own Coach Education processes.”

This theme was picked up by AFC Principal Coaching Consultant Wim Koevermans when he ran through the guiding principles of the new ‘C’ diploma. “The important thing in designing your ‘C’ Licence courses,” he said, “is to look at your own landscape, analyse your country’s footballing DNA, pinpoint and respect the factors that make you different and envisage the style of football best suited to your characteristics.”

When designing the curriculum for a ‘C’ course, he highlighted the importance, at grassroots and early development levels, of simply letting kids play football rather than, as he put it: “Having them standing around listening to a talkative coach who wants to show-off how much he knows about football. It’s about giving them information that will help them to develop – but, ideally, while they are playing and enjoying themselves.”

He offered a simple example of an issue ‘C’ level coaches need to be equipped to address – the nature of small-sided games. “If you play 4v4 on a long, narrow pitch, play will be vertical with a lot of wall-passes and 1v1 situations. If you play on a wider pitch with four goals, you will encourage a lot more lateral passing and combinations – and not so much 1v1. Some might start with 4v4; move up to 7v7 at around the age of nine; and then move up to 9v9 box-to-box. Others might want to begin with 5v5 because they want to start developing goalkeepers at an early age. It’s about coordinating your ideas and the development of the players – and putting

**AFC COACHING CONVENTION UPDATE**

**MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS ENDORSED (32)**

PRO (6)	A (12)	B (14)
JAPAN	JORDAN	LEBANON
CHINA	BANGLADESH	TAJKISTAN
QATAR	INDIA	SINGAPORE
AUSTRALIA	ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN	BRUNEI DARUSSALAM
KOREA REPUBLIC	MALAYSIA	PALESTINE
UZBEKISTAN	PHILIPPINES	KYRGYZ REPUBLIC
	HONG KONG	DPR KOREA
	KUWAIT	IRAQ
	UAE	TIMOR LESTE
	INDONESIA	MYANMAR
	BAHRAIN	MALDIVES
	SAUDI ARABIA	CHINESE TAIPEI
		CAMBODIA



*AFC Principal Coaching Consultant Wim Koevermans provided an overview of the AFC Coaching Convention, including the guiding principles of the new ‘C’ diploma.*



Jose Carpio, AFC's head of football development, introduced two new diplomas for Goalkeeper Coaches, designed specifically for the specialised role.

them into challenging situations. It doesn't really help if you win 9-0 all the time ..."

To introduce the two new diplomas for Goalkeeper Coaches, the baton was passed to AFC's head of football development, Jose Carpio – a former goalkeeper himself. He pointed out that the role of the goalkeeper has probably evolved more radically in recent years than job descriptions for other components in team mechanisms. The two courses (60 hours for the Goalkeeping 'B' diploma; 120 hours for the Goalkeeping 'A' diploma with, as in all courses, at least half of that dedicated to practical work on the pitch) have to embrace psychology as well as technical and tactical aspects, coupled with speed of decision-making and the need to develop a comprehensive understanding of the game in order to be equipped to cope with today's sweeper-keeper requirements if game plans involve holding a high defensive line. The Goalkeeper Coach therefore needs to be given the right tools to design reality-based sessions to hone individual technique and also to ensure that the keeper integrates seamlessly into team play. In addition, the coach has to focus on the development of particular mental strengths,

bearing in mind that a high percentage of goalkeepers can spend hours on the bench – and then suddenly required to come off it as a result of an injury or red card.

As Jose Carpio commented: "This specialised role is about creating a good training environment, coupled with matchday preparations to ensure that the goalkeeper is always ready to perform at his or her best level."

The event was also punctuated by some interesting questions. One of them, for example, was about recruiting former coaches or players to conduct sessions during coach education courses even if they do not hold a valid AFC-endorsed coaching licence. The answer, of course, was affirmative. "Provided that the person is not involved in evaluating the students, this is certainly in order," Andy Roxburgh commented.

"What's more, it's something that most of us, as coach educators, have done at some stage. Famous ex-players or coaches can always be invited to contribute, because it is overwhelmingly positive to make use of their knowledge, experience and expertise."

Another question provoked reflection on how to protect the credibility and integrity of the AFC Coaching Convention. The answers were: no favours (licences gifted to former players, for instance); no tourism (strict limits on students from other MAs); no external control (MAs to take ownership of coach education processes); and, above all, no complacency. The Convention's lifespan of three years means that licences are beginning to come up for renewal via 15 hours of further education. Incidentally, another question related to the difference between 'diploma' and 'licence'. The answer to this one is that the AFC diploma is a permanent recognition of a completed educational course. But the licence, akin to a driving licence, requires periodical renewal (every three years) if the coach wishes to stay in the driving seat of a team. Coaching is a continuous learning process.

One final question – again posed by one of the online participants: how do I become a tutor? And the question is absolutely crucial. In practical terms, part of the answer is written into the Convention: tutors must have a licence at the level they teach – at the very least. But the importance of the tutor goes beyond qualifications. The coach educator influences the frontline coaches of the future and, in consequence, the future of the game. So, the tutor, in addition to knowledge of the game and teaching methodologies, must aim to create an optimal learning environment and convert coach education courses into inspirational experiences. AFC, very conscious that tutors at each MA play such a key role, has set up a working group to address the issue.

But this is another story which, along with a round-up of the other sessions in AFC's programme of online events, will be picked up in future issues.

## FRIENDS OF ASIA

### A TRIBUTE TO GÉRARD HOULLIER AND JOZEF VENGLOS

Asian football has lost two friends. Within a period of barely six weeks, the media were publishing tributes to Gérard Houllier and then to Jozef Venglos. In heartfelt tributes from players and from colleagues within the coaching profession, human values featured strongly. So did words like 'visionary' or expressions such as 'ahead of his time'. Their contributions to the game reached far beyond lists of successes and silverware.

Jozef Venglos initiated and culminated his coaching career in AFC territory with Sydney-based FC Prague in Australia in 1966 and then with JEF United in Japan 36 years later. Australia and Malaysia were two of the five national teams he managed and developed, making a huge impact with his methods, philosophy and management style. By the time he became the first foreign manager at a top-level British club – Aston Villa – in 1990, his name had been anglicised to Joe, and, in response to the manner and manners of his coaching, the words Gentleman Joe became sufficient to identify the Slovak luminary.

At the same time, Joe was also a gifted coach educator, and, as the chairman of UEFA's Technical Committee,





*Gérard Houllier, the renowned manager of Liverpool FC, was an expert in the art and science of football, with an uncanny ability to make an impact on all grades and sectors of the game.*

contributed enormously to the development of the European Coaching Licence. In his final role as President of the AEFCA (Europe's Coaches Association), he championed the education, protection and advancement of coaches everywhere - Joe was undoubtedly a coaches' coach and a hero to their cause.

"It was a privilege to work with Joe for nearly 20 years," commented AFC Technical Director Andy Roxburgh.

"He was a great coaching colleague, a wonderful friend and a 'diamond' as a person. I am heartbroken at his passing, but his smile, warmth and passion will resonate every time his name is mentioned. I salute Joe Venglos the coach, the educator, and, above all, the man."

Many of the same sentiments could be integrated into tributes to Gérard Houllier who, unlike Joe, never coached in AFC territory. His impressive CV featured, in a long list of trophies and honours, a memorable quartet of English and European titles with Liverpool in 2001. But, again, the trophy cabinet does not tell the full story. Andy Roxburgh, in an interview with the French sports daily L'Équipe, once described him as a "da Vinci coach because of his expertise in the art and science of football, and because he demonstrated his ability to make an impact on all grades and sectors of the game".

He was among a select few who genuinely excelled as an all-rounder equipped to make an impact not only as a front-line team manager but also as a player developer and as a coach educator. What's more, his role in recent years as Global Sporting Director of Red Bull Soccer capitalised, as the title suggests, on his global view of the game.

It was this spectrum of knowledge, experience and expertise that he unstintingly gifted to audiences at AFC events such as the annual Elite Club Coach Forum; conferences related to coaching and coach education; and other AFC projects. Indeed, on the day of his death, he was on the team sheet for an online meeting of the working group currently designing the AFC Emotions in Football Project (mentioned in our previous issue), which he valued highly.

"I like to think of the mental side of the game as the roof of a structure," he maintained, "with strategy, game



*Joe Venglos was a football all-rounder, contributing to the game as a player, coach and coach educator. Gentleman Joe, a coaches' coach who made a huge impact on football in Asia and Europe.*

plans, tactical awareness and technique underneath. If the roof leaks, everything underneath is affected ..."

As Andy Roxburgh says in his Editorial, "the ultimate aim for football's trailblazers is to leave a lasting legacy" – something which Joe Venglos and Gérard Houllier undoubtedly did. They were top coaches, great men and valued friends of Asian football. May they rest in peace.

## COACHING CONVENTION

## GATHERING MOMENTUM

Football does not like complacency. But there are moments when a degree of quiet satisfaction might be permitted, especially when they project glimmers of light into the darkness of the pandemic. And taking a step back to gain a wide-angle perspective on the three major AFC projects reveals that, despite all the adversities, remarkable advances are being made on the AFC Coaching Convention, the AFC Grassroots Charter and the AFC Elite Youth Scheme.

In terms of coach education, it might be worth mentioning that when a Coaching Convention was implanted in Europe, it took a decade to welcome all the continent's MAs on board. Progress in three years suggests that, in Asia, a full house might be achieved in a considerably shorter period of time. The momentum can be gauged by numbers. In January 2020, when the pandemic was, if you like, in its infancy, 19 Member Associations had been ratified as signatories of the Convention. This figure has now risen to 34 – an eye-catching 72% of the AFC family.

“At the outset,” AFC Technical Director Andy Roxburgh reflected, “we stressed to the MAs that this was an endorsement scheme which was not about imposing uniformity of course content. We didn't want that. We



The 11th AFC Grassroots Panel Meeting was held online, with Member Associations joining in from across the Continent.

wanted uniformity in terms of coach education standards, leaving the MAs to take much greater responsibility for establishing their own style, their own content and their own management methods in line with individual cultures. The requirement was to adhere to the AFC guidelines but, building on those standards, to control their own destiny. It signified quite a dramatic change – a change of culture. The Convention is about standards of education, not a particular style of football. And I think that is one of the main reasons why our MAs have been so quick to climb on board and embrace the new strategy.”

Putting a highlighter pen to the innovations since the previous Coaches Circle, Uzbekistan became the sixth MA to be ratified at Pro level and, in April, Jordan became the seventh; Saudi Arabia and Bhutan rounded off the dozen names on the list of those endorsed at 'A' level; and a quartet formed by Cambodia, Chinese Taipei,



Macau and Afghanistan have also been welcomed aboard at 'B' level. In the meantime, it has to be admitted that the pandemic has applied brakes to the evaluation procedures involving no fewer than 15 Member Associations. Bangladesh, Indonesia and Singapore, who have applied for ratification at the Pro level, have been obliged to tread water and rearrange dates for their Pro courses to take place. Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, previously endorsed at the 'B' level, joined the half-dozen in line for 'A' level ratification and the four aiming for membership at 'B' level can tell similar stories.

But the bottom line is that 42 MAs are either on board or climbing up the gangway, leaving only five who have yet to apply for membership. This translates into more opportunities for coaches to wear the AFC logo on their professional qualifications and, of course, greater freedom of movement within the AFC's territory.

## AFC COACHING CONVENTION CATEGORIES

### PRO - Level



FOOTBALL AUSTRALIA



CHINESE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



JAPAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



JORDAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



KOREA FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



UZBEKISTAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



QATAR FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

### A - Level



BAHRAIN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



BANGLADESH FOOTBALL FEDERATION



BHUTAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION



THE HONG KONG FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION LTD.



ALL INDIA FOOTBALL FEDERATION



FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF INDONESIA



FOOTBALL FEDERATION ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN



KUWAIT FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF MALAYSIA



PHILIPPINE FOOTBALL FEDERATION



SAUDI ARABIAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

### B - Level



AFGHANISTAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION



NATIONAL FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF BRUNEI DARUSSALAM



FOOTBALL FEDERATION OF CAMBODIA



CHINESE TAIPEI FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



DPR KOREA FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



IRAQI FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



THE KYRGYZ FOOTBALL UNION



LEBANESE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



MACAU FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF MALDIVES



MYANMAR FOOTBALL FEDERATION



PALESTINE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE



TAJIKISTAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION



FEDERAÇÃO FUTEBOL TIMOR-LESTE

## GRASSROOTS

# ROOTING FOR SUCCESS

The grassroots are growing again. Our previous issue, published in the autumn of 2020, reported a status quo that had remained unchanged since the issue before that. But the pandemic-induced lethargy has been shaken off in recent months, not least by the publication in January of this year of the updated AFC Grassroots Charter regulations. Another tangible result is that six more MAs have now been endorsed at Bronze level. In chronological order since October 2020, they have been Nepal, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, and, most recently, Mongolia. This sextet brings the total of affiliated MAs to 34 – which means that, in just over three years, targets have been well and truly surpassed.

“I think the MAs were quick to pick up on this,” Andy Roxburgh commented, “because the Charter is quite simple to understand and to implement.”

A dozen evaluations are still in the pipeline, including applications from Bhutan, Guam, Hong Kong and Malaysia for promotion from Bronze to Silver status, while Qatar’s bid to come straight in at Gold level has also been hampered by the pandemic. Australia and Macau also appear in the pending tray, simply because, as founder members of the Charter at Gold and Bronze



The Football Federation of Turkmenistan was awarded Bronze membership of the AFC Grassroots Charter in February 2020, and held Grassroots Awards in November.

level respectively, their status is, after three years, up for renewal – an aspect which may require a flexible approach in the current situation.

As it stands, 72% of AFC’s Member Associations are already signatories of the Grassroots Charter and working hard to nurture the roots of the game.

## AFC GRASSROOTS CHARTER CATEGORIES



### GOLD



FOOTBALL AUSTRALIA



JAPAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



KFA  
KOREA FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

### SILVER



CHINESE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



Jordan Football Association



PHILIPPINE FOOTBALL FEDERATION



FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE



TAJIKISTAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION



UZBEKISTAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

### BRONZE



AFGHANISTAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION



BAHRAIN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



BANGLADESH FOOTBALL FEDERATION



BHUTAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION



NATIONAL FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF BRUNEI DARUSSALAM



CHINESE TAIPEI FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



GUAM FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



THE HONG KONG FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION LTD.



ALL INDIA FOOTBALL FEDERATION



FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF INDONESIA



KUWAIT FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



LAO FOOTBALL FEDERATION



LEBANESE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



MACAU FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF MALAYSIA



FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF MALDIVES



MONGOLIAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION



MYANMAR FOOTBALL FEDERATION



ALL NEPAL FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



PALESTINE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



FA THAILAND  
THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF THAILAND



FEDERACÃO FUTEBOL TIMOR-LESTE



FOOTBALL FEDERATION OF TURKMENISTAN



VIETNAM FOOTBALL FEDERATION

## ELITE YOUTH PLANTING TREES

The most concise mission statement for the AFC Elite Youth Scheme might well be the old saying about planting trees in the knowledge that you may not live to sit in their shade. The project was designed to encourage MAs to promote talent development via well-structured youth teams and academies – elements which, in some countries, had been conspicuously absent. It augurs well for the future that, since the previous Coaches Circle was published, the number of endorsed Member Associations has leapt up from 11 to 18.

The most eye-catching step into the spotlight has been made by Vietnam, who join Qatar and Korea Republic on the top three-star rung. Hard work at youth level has already helped Vietnam make an impact at the U23 stage (and a top-eight finish at senior level in the AFC Asian Cup 2019), and the application was spearheaded by the PVF Academy. Set up in the Hung Yên area outside Hanoi in 2008, the statement of intent to develop young talent was the appointment, as Technical Director, of Eric Abrams, who helped today's 'golden generation' of players through Belgium's age-group teams under the leadership of Michel Sablon, who is now Technical Director of the UAE and a member of the AFC Coach Education Panel.

In the meantime, six MAs have jumped on board, half of



*Vietnam has become the third three-star member of the AFC Elite Youth Scheme; its focus on youth at the PVF Academy and hard work at the U23 level has clearly translated to the playing field.*

whom (Bahrain, Bhutan and the Maldives) have set up their own academies. Hong Kong's application featured the SC Kitchee Academy in Kowloon; Thailand's bid highlighted the BG Pathum United Academy, set up in 2009 in Pathum Thani on the northern fringes of Bangkok; and Lebanon's youth development set-up includes the Athletico SC Academy, founded as far back as 2006 and currently in a cooperation agreement with French club Olympique Lyonnais. The academy now has eight branches and includes academy facilities for girls – which is another item to add on to future development agendas for other MAs.

An academy, it has to be added, is a stipulation in applications for full membership. But provisional AFC endorsement may be granted without the academy element, provided that all other criteria are fulfilled. This is the case of Iraq who, pending the AFC evaluation currently in the pipeline, could join Mongolia as a second MA with provisional status.

With well over one-third of AFC members already 'planting trees', it is legitimate to hope that they will bear fruit in a near future.

## AFC ELITE YOUTH SCHEME CATEGORIES

### ENDORSED MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

#### 3 - STAR



KOREA FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



QATAR FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



VIETNAM FOOTBALL FEDERATION

#### 2 - STAR



ALL INDIA FOOTBALL FEDERATION



JAPAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF MALAYSIA



TAJIKISTAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION



UZBEKISTAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

#### 1 - STAR



BAHRAIN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



BHUTAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION



THE HONG KONG FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION LTD.



THE KYRGYZ FOOTBALL UNION



LEBANESE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF MALDIVES



MYANMAR FOOTBALL FEDERATION



FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE



THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF THAILAND

#### PROVISIONAL



MONGOLIAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION

### MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS TO BE EVALUATED

#### 2 - STAR



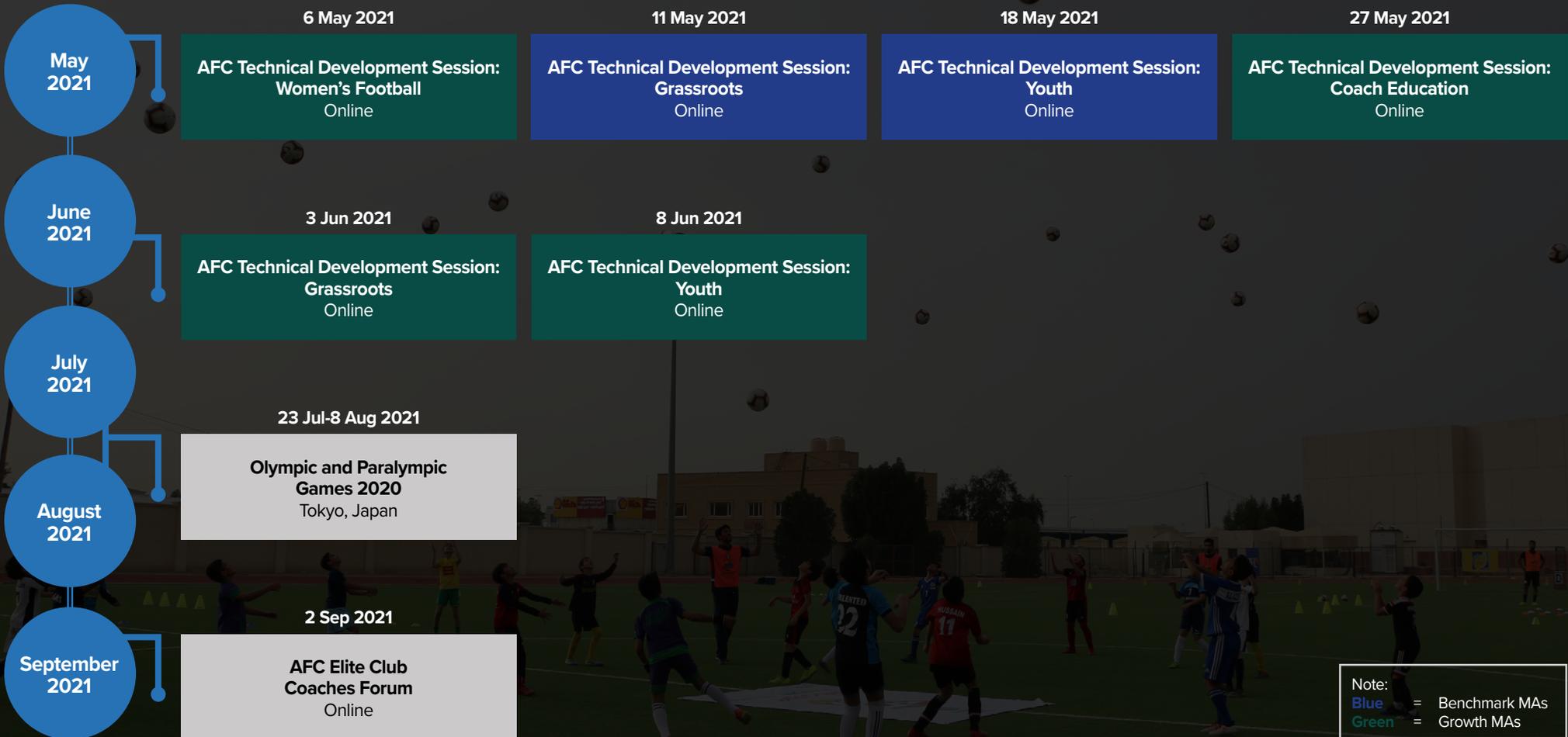
FOOTBALL FEDERATION ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

#### PROVISIONAL



IRAQI FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

## KEY DATES



Note:  
Blue = Benchmark MAs  
Green = Growth MAs

## AFC TECHNICAL REPORTS



ALL AFC TECHNICAL REPORTS CAN BE VIEWED AT:



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### EDITORIAL GROUP

Andy Roxburgh  
Graham Turner

### PRODUCTION

Bridget Rive

### DESIGN

Raja Amy

### TECHNICAL ADMINISTRATION

Khalid Idris  
Mandy Leong  
Takeshi Ono (Japan)

### PHOTOGRAPHY

Asian Football Confederation  
AFP  
FIFA/Getty Images  
Adam Aidil Padali



**Asian Football Confederation**

AFC House, Jalan 1/155B, Bukit Jalil, 57000 Kuala Lumpur

T: +603 8994 3388 F: +603 8994 2689

**the-AFC.com**