

District Football Teams

Purpose

This paper is to brief members on Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD)'s strategy in promoting football in Hong Kong, in particular, the community involvement of District Councils (DCs) in setting up District Football Teams in 18 districts.

Background

2. In Hong Kong, football has a long history and there were significant developments from the 50's till 70's. At that time, the level of play of our local football league as well as our national squad were at the top among Asian countries. However, the situation has changed in the last two decades as the Mainland and other Asian countries like Korea and Japan have made great improvement in the international football arena.

3. While our level of play falls behind our neighbouring countries in recent years, an opinion survey, which was conducted by the Central Policy Unit in 2003, revealed that over 81 % of the respondents supported that the Government should give more support to help raise the standard of the sport in Hong Kong. It reflected that people were still interested in the local game and would wish to see a great leap in our local football development.

4. According to the study of a Netherlands' consultancy firm which was commissioned by the Hong Kong Football Association (HKFA) in 2002, Hong Kong needs to develop more football teams and clubs at the community level so as to generate more interest in the sport and to build a broad base for nurturing talented players. As such, through the joint efforts of LCSD and HKFA, different youth football development programmes have been restructured and strengthened to provide a strong base for development in the districts. A youth football development pathway has gradually been established. Potential footballers aged

under 20 are now provided with different gateways to develop their potential and may be able to become professional footballers in the First Division teams. A diagram showing the linkage between various training schemes together with details of the programmes is at the **Annex**.

District Football Teams

5. The District Football Teams Training Scheme is an important step to channel promising young players from the local community level to various division teams of the HKFA. To upgrade the standard of play in local football leagues and enhance sense of belonging to the districts, HKFA invited the 18 DCs to form District Football Teams to participate in the Third Division League - District Team (League) established in 2002. LCSD strongly supports HKFA's effort in promoting football in 18 districts as the formation of District Football Teams representing the DCs help promote the image of the districts, foster community building and improve the overall standard of the sport in Hong Kong.

6. The inauguration of the League in 2002 attracted 11 District Football Teams. In 2003, all 18 districts formed teams to play in the League. Funding support to most of these teams is provided by the DCs while LCSD supports the teams by reserving training venues for them. So far, the result is very encouraging. The Tai Po and Kwai Tsing teams won the champion and first runners-up of the 2003/04 Third Division League and they have been promoted to the Second Division in the 2004/05 football season. According to our record, most of the players representing the District Football Teams are trainees of our various football development programmes. It proves that our strategy in developing a broad base of talented youth players at district level has achieved some initial successes.

Latest Views of DCs on District Football Teams

7. At our recent meeting with the DCs' Chairmen and Vice-chairmen, we noted that there were mixed views among the 18 DCs regarding the provision of funding support for District Football Teams. Some of them are very supportive of their District Football Teams and provide significant financial support to them. The others are of mixed views or not so keen because they consider that it should be the Government's responsibility to fund football development in Hong Kong

or funding should be sought from other agencies like the Hong Kong Jockey Club, such as setting aside certain proceeds generated from football betting to support the development of football in Hong Kong.

The Administration's Responses to DCs' Views

8. In view of the fact that the District Football Teams are representing the DCs and bring positive impact to the districts, they deserve the support of the local communities and the DCs. Since different DCs will have their own priorities and interests, it should be their discretion to decide on the level of funding support to be provided to their own football teams. However, the DC should at least support a reasonable portion of the basic expenses required for the operation of its team.

9. On the waiver of venue charges for the training of District Football Teams, we have made new arrangements to further support the teams. We have included the training of the District Football Teams as part of our District Sports Teams Training Scheme in the football season of 2004/05. Under the Scheme, each team will be provided with 36 free training sessions at LCSD venues. No venue charges will be made. The teams can make use of these free training sessions to prepare for the League. We believe that the new measure will reduce the financial burden on the teams while at the same time encourage more regular training to enhance their performance.

10. On the other hand, Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) and LCSD will continue to explore alternatives to provide more support to the District Football Teams, including exploring possible funding support from the Hong Kong Jockey Club. At the same time, we will encourage and assist the District Football Teams to solicit sponsorships to support their operation.

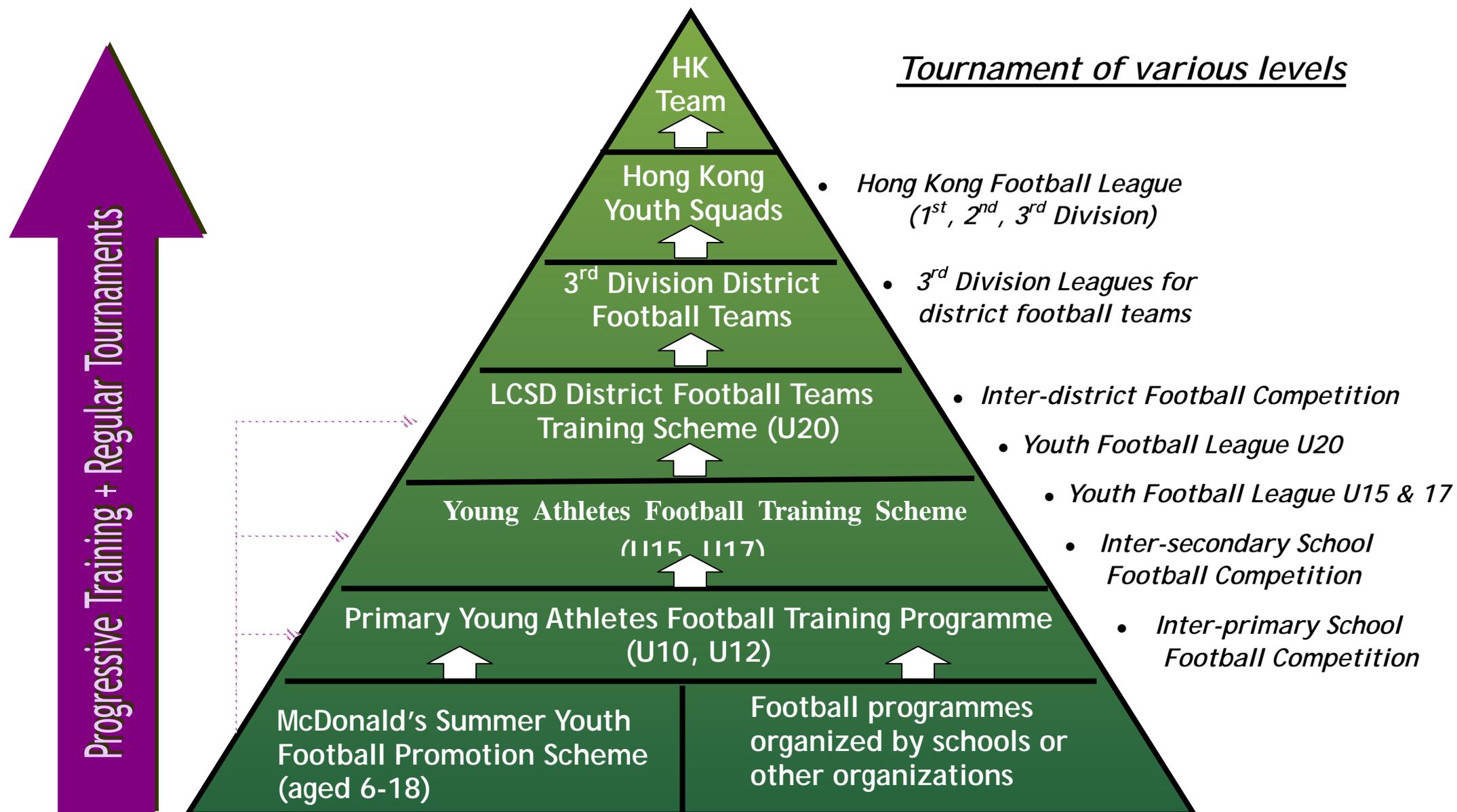
Way Forward

11. The setting up of District Football Teams representing DCs will no doubt generate more community interest in football, enhance the sense of belonging among local residents and bring good image to the districts. We will work hand in hand with the DCs and other parties concerned to facilitate the operation of the district teams and their participation in

regular training and high level competitions to develop a strong culture for football development in the community.

Leisure and Cultural Services Department
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Youth Football Development Pathway



Youth Football Development Programme

McDonald's Youth Football Promotion Scheme (July-October)

This is a very popular summer youth activities held annually for youngsters aged 6 to 18. The scheme aims at promoting youth football, providing systematic and fun-filled football training activities for the beginners. Divided into four phases and taught by over 400 registered HKFA coaches, the scheme runs from July to October. The first phase aims at providing fundamental training, the second emphasizes on team work and attacking and defending strategies; the third involves intra-district competition which culminates in the Hong Kong Inter-District Championship. Over 20,000 participants are attracted to the Scheme in 2004.

Primary Young Athletes Football Training Programme (October-June)

This programme is a continuation of the McDonald's Youth Football Promotion Scheme. It mainly provides football technique training for players aged under 12, emphasizing competitiveness required in training. Held in 10 districts, it is divided into two age groups, with a total of 20 experienced D-class coaches acting as instructors. Training are held twice weekly, with six-a-side competitions being held in three long school holiday. A total of 404 games will be played with 600 participants.

Young Athletes Football Training Scheme (October-June)

The Scheme aims at identifying talented players between 13 and 16 through systematic training. Conducted in 13 districts and divided into two age groups, the scheme is taught by 26 coaches with C-class or above qualifications and 13 registered goalkeeping coaches. A total of 936 players are recruited through a stringent selection process conducted by the HKFA and the training begins with fundamental football skills before moving into tactical drills and matches. Those who show talent in the sport will be selected to join the HKFA Youth Squad Teams.

LCSD District Football Teams Training Scheme (October-June)

In order to promote football development in Hong Kong and to generate more community interest in local football activities, the LCSD has worked with the HKFA to set up district youth football teams under the “LCSD District Sports Teams Training Scheme” in 18 districts as one of the new initiatives since 2000. 36 talented young football players, aged 17 to 19, from each district will be recruited through a stringent selection process. They have to undergo series of training conducted weekly by coaches with C class or above qualification and will compete with other district teams in the Inter-district Tournament, with the aim of gaining match experience and raising their on-field abilities. Players with outstanding performance will be channeled to HKFA or its various Divisions teams to receive further training.