



L-R in Epson jerseys: Ho Jia Wei, Mohammed Riaz Bin Mohamed Jaleel, Gabriel Lee Jie Le, Muhammad Azri Suhaili Bin Muhammad Azar, Afif Fikri Bin Abdullah Junaidi, & Muhammad Bin Aman with Yasuharu Sorimachi (Centre), Head Coach of Matsumoto Yamaga FC

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From Singapore to Japan: Football Dreams Come True for Six Singaporean Youths

- SINGAPORE, November 28, 2017 -

Six Singapore youths fulfilled their football dreams in a special training stint with Matsumoto Yamaga Football Club in Matsumoto, Japan from 14 to 20 November 2017. Made possible by Epson Singapore, the seven-day training and cultural exchange trip to Matsumoto is an annual effort and an integral part of Epson's efforts to contribute towards sports and youth development in Singapore. In this third training stint, the initiative aimed to provide youth footballers in Singapore with overseas development opportunities, and to expose them to Japanese coaching methods and training techniques.

The six boys identified for this once-in-a lifetime opportunity were Ho Jia Wei, Mohammed Riaz Bin Mohamed Jalee, Gabriel Lee Jie Le, Afif Fikri Bin Abdullah Junaidi, Muhammad Azri Suhaili Bin Muhammad Azar, and Muhammad Bin Aman. Each player was selected based on their individual footballing skills and technique, their tactical understanding and ability to read the game, as well as whether they possess the qualities, attributes and discipline of a football player, both on and off the field. The players were assessed through football activities they took part in earlier this year, including the Epson Youth Challenge, a youth football tournament held in partnership with Geylang International Football Club (GIFC), in support of GetActive! Singapore, and in celebration of Singapore Youth Olympic Festival 2017.

Ms. Tan May Lin, General Manager (Sales, Marketing and Customer Service division) of Epson Singapore said, "Epson takes pride in our ongoing commitment to football and to empowering youth development, a core focus area of our corporate social responsibility in Singapore. We believe strongly that youths should be given the opportunity to pursue their dreams and we are glad to be able to fuel the football passion of these six individuals. Through this training and cultural exchange trip, we hope the boys learned a great deal from J-League players in Japan, and we wish them all the best in pursuing their footballing dreams."

The training took place at the Karigane Soccer Field in Matsumoto, where all six players participated in drills and practice matches with Matsumoto Yamaga Football Club. They also received individual training from Shigeo Yamazaki, Head Coach of Under-18, Matsumoto Yamaga FC.

Mr. Shigeo Yamazaki said, "The boys did their best at the training and we could see improvements in their football skills and gameplay techniques over the three-days training period with us. Apart from focusing on the training, the players also volunteered with our travelling football clinic at two kindergartens, where they assisted former J-League players to coach children aged seven to twelve. In addition, the boys stayed in our club's dormitory to gain first-hand experience of our Japanese culture, and even helped run a home game against Kyoto Sanga FC at Alwin Stadium."

Embracing the 'Work Hard, Play Hard' philosophy, Epson also took the boys on sightseeing trips to Daio Wasabi Farm, Japan's largest wasabi farm, and Matsumoto Castle, one of five castles designated as the 'National Treasures of Japan'.

Prior to the start of the Matsumoto Yamaga FC versus Kyoto Sanga FC game at Alwin Stadium on 19 November, Matsumoto Yamaga FC and Geylang International Football Club (GIFC) celebrated the first year anniversary of their partnership with speeches given by spokespeople from Epson Singapore, GIFC, and Matsumoto Yamaga FC to the 16,000-strong crowd. The six boys from Singapore were also the official flag bearers at the opening of the match. As part of the celebrations for "Singapore Day", Singapore's famous chicken rice was prepared at Yamaga Café and sold to spectators at the booth stalls on match day, along with GIFC's merchandise.

Ben Teng, GIFC Chairman said, "Since the signing of the MOU, the partnership with Matsumoto Yamaga and Epson has brought many mutually beneficial outcomes for all parties, providing numerous opportunities to expose our boys to Japanese training techniques to improve their skills. We are deeply appreciative for the friendship with Yamaga and Epson, and we look forward to more opportunities for greater collaboration in the future."

Afif Fikri Bin Abdullah Junaidi, who was shortlisted for his performance at Geylang International FC said, "The past few days have been fun yet intense, because the Japanese players train at a much faster pace than we're used to. Learning to keep up with them in terms of speed, discipline and technique is good training for us. We will bring these learnings home to improve our football skills and hopefully assist other Singaporean youth footballers do the same. I have also learnt about humility – despite being much better than us, they are always friendly and humble, and made an effort to help us."

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