Kolo Toure & PFA back 'history of African players in British football' research

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Led by Centre Spot, an organisation that uses sport and physical activity to engage with young people from deprived backgrounds, the project will focus on how football has raised the aspirations of young people and helped to tackle racism within the game.

The group, mainly from Birmingham and Sandwell, will try to shed light on the evolving history of African players in British football by carrying out print, photographic and film archive research at both the Premier League archive and the National Football Museum. In addition, they will interview and record the experiences of professional players, managers, coaches and fans.

The young volunteers will be trained in all aspects of delivering and managing the project, including oral history training, handling and interpreting archives, marketing, using creative media and more.

The project will culminate in the production of a documentary, a national touring exhibition and accompanying website. Further results will include materials such as ‘how to’ guides for use in schools to inspire other young people to tackle similar projects.

Manchester City player, Kolo Toure, and player at Arsenal between 2002-2009; Ivory Coast international player and supporter of the ‘Kick It Out’ campaign, added his support: “It is inspiring to see such young people take an interest in the contribution players from Africa have made to the British game. Organisations like Heritage Lottery Fund and Centre Spot play an important role in allowing young people to express themselves and the heritage we share. Football is a fantastic sport that brings people together and this marks a great opportunity to look at how African ambassadors of the game, both past and present, have played a crucial role in breaking down social and racial barriers. Thanks to the Professional Footballers’ Association for their help in making this happen.”

Simone Pound, Senior Executive of the Professional Footballers Association (PFA), added: “I am delighted that the significant contribution made by African players in the English game will be acknowledged in this way. By engaging with young people to make the documentary we are assured a vital link in the legacy which assures our history underpins everything for their future.“

Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands Anne Jenkins said: “This is an inspired and exemplary project by these young people. This is a fantastic opportunity for them to show a full historical picture of the experiences of African football players in British football and the changes they have contributed to over the last century.“

Leading the project, Emmanuel Abbeyquaye, Director of Centre Spot, commented: “This is a really important funding for the project from HLF, without which this rich heritage might be lost. These ambassadors have distinguished themselves both on and off the pitch and become role models for many young people. They have broken down cultural, racial, and social barriers whist keeping their unique cultural heritage and identify intact.”

The scheme will seek to share this heritage with the wider community, promoting inter-cultural dialogue and engage interest in the cultural heritage of the players and their cultural origins.

The scheme has full support from Oral historians, the Professional Football Association (PFA) and Lets Kick Racism Out of Football, and will run till October 2012.

Notes to editors

Centre Spot CIC is a creative social enterprise that uses Sports and Physical Activity to engage and build capacities of people, particularly young people. Centre Spot seeks to encourage the uptake of physical activity, and improve the physical wellbeing of communities. We also marry sports and physical activity with regeneration projects to re-ignite a passion for learning and skilling on qualifications, work experience, volunteering and the soft skills of self-esteem and self-confidence.

Underlying all work carried out by Centre Spot is a commitment to engage with different people across all levels, using sports as a tool to improve community's performance, and address issues of social exclusion. Visit the Centrespot website

The Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) was formed on 2nd December 1907 and is the world's longest established professional sportsperson's union. The aims of the PFA are to protect, improve and negotiate the conditions, rights and status of all professional players by collective bargaining agreements.

***Kick It Out** is football's equality and inclusion campaign.
The brand name of the campaign - Let's Kick Racism Out of Football - was established in 1993 and Kick It Out established as a body in 1997.
Kick It Out works throughout the football, educational and community sectors to challenge discrimination, encourage inclusive practices and work for positive change.

The campaign is supported and funded by the game's governing bodies, including founding body the Professional Footballers Association (PFA), the Premier League and The Football Association. Visit the Kick It Out website

2004 marked ten years of campaigning.

Further information
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