

EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY

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SPEECH BY TAN ENG LIANG, CHAIRMAN, SINGAPORE SPORTS COUNCIL,  
AT THE CHEQUE PRESENTATION OF THE MILO FOOTBALL TRAINING SCHEME  
AT THE NATIONAL STADIUM CONFERENCE ROOM ON 7 MARCH 81 AT 11 AM

The Milo Football Training Scheme is now in its eighth year. From modest beginnings, it has grown from strength to strength. Today, it occupies an important position in the overall football development plan in Singapore.

Six members of the scheme - Fandi Ahmad, Au-Yeong Pak Kuan, Malek Awab, Kannan Kunjuran, Amin Sariman and Nor Halis Shafik - are now in the national squad, while others like Shiock Kim Seng and Omar Khalid, are knocking at its door. As for the under-16, 75% of the Lion City Cup teams in the last two years, comprised players from the scheme.

These achievements are reassuring. However, it is wise for us to take stock of this position. If the Milo scheme were to continue contributing to the quality of football at national level, it would itself have to evolve at a greater pace in order to keep up with the fast turnover and demands at the top.

In this direction, I am pleased to learn that steps have already been taken to ensure a faster rate of development. For a start, the scheme is initiating a main centre where the cream of the under-16 players would be given additional specialised training. In addition to this, a new competition involving under-16 teams from the various organisations, uniformed groups and schools, would be held during August. This competitive opportunity is planned to accelerate the maturation of the young players so that they will be in a position to assume representative roles earlier in their football career.

And talking of improving the quality of the scheme and reaching out for excellence, I have been told that among other things, lack of imagination and strangulation of individualism, are just two of the criticisms made against present-day football coaching in general.

Allow me to talk a little on coaching, especially the handling of coaching at mass level as in the case of the Milo scheme. To my mind, the first objective of a good coach is to recognise and develop the strengths and individual skills of players. From there, he has to adopt a pattern of team play that explores and capitalises on those strengths and skills.

In modern coaching, there must be room for individuals to flourish, whether he is a good dribbler, a strong kicker, a good ball passer or has an outstanding heading ability. This is important in the context of the Milo scheme where coaches, engrossed in team formation at various centres, may tend to overlook the importance of individual brilliance.

We must at all costs avoid the situation where the individual is coached right out of the game and where nobody on the field is any longer free to think for himself. I would, therefore, urge our coaches in the scheme to continue to fight against any tendency to suppress individual flair and brilliance. A team must contain a number of brilliant, individualistic players, each capable of winning a match by his strength and skill. But success can only come if there is a perfect blend of these talents from goalkeeper to each of the 10 players on the field. And it is up to the coach to achieve this.

In the final analysis, coaching is purely and simply a method for getting the best out of an individual in terms of that individual's ability. In other words, if a player is being developed as a striker, effective coaching will see that he is able to score when it matters most during a match.

Football is very much in the news. We are in the thick of the Malaysia Cup competition. Only recently, football won for itself three awards for the best team, coach and meritorious award. Needless to say, these awards will serve to inspire trainees in the Milo scheme to improve themselves further.

I would like to thank Nestle for once again supporting the Milo football scheme with a donation of \$45,000/-. To the Members of the Advisory Committee and coaches, I thank you for giving of your time and effort to see the scheme through in the last year.