

ADDRESS BY WAYNE FORDE – PRESIDENT, GUYANA FOOTBALL FEDERATION INC. AT THE LAUNCH OF THE GFF-SCOTIABANK ACADEMY TRAINING CENTRE – UMANA YANA, GEORGETOWN ON THURSDAY, 9TH FEBRUARY, 2017

Thank you all for joining us on this wonderful morning, in this awesome setting, to witness this exciting, landmark moment for football in Guyana.

Today's launch of the GFF-Scotiabank Academy Training Centres (ATC) is yet another compelling example of how things have changed for the better, over the period of just one year.

It is our humble expectation, that all of Guyana can finally bear witness to an Executive Committee that is fully focused on the development of football, by implementing the necessary reforms that will forever change the way the game is run. This nationwide network of GFF-Scotiabank Academy Training Centres will play a major part in our plan to transform football in Guyana.

It is a special moment for us after months of preparations and hard work. I would like to thank our Technical Director Mr. Ian Greenwood and his team for their efforts, and for their commitment to delivering real, positive change.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say a very special thank you to our corporate partner and sponsor – SCOTIABANK – for this programme but more importantly, for fixing your gaze on the ultimate beneficiary of the game – its players.

The GFF is honoured to be working with you to help develop our nation's young footballers. You have shown time and time again that you are committed to helping our young sportsmen and women achieve their goals.

We are delighted that you, like us, can see the great value and potential in the emerging National football brand, and in the good work we are doing. This is so important for the GFF, as we restore stability and credibility, that we have the support of highly respected, international brands such as Scotiabank. It speaks volumes about the direction we are moving the sport in. We look forward to a long and fruitful partnership that reciprocates and perpetuates real value, as we work hand in hand to put in place the foundations for football to thrive. Today's groundbreaking announcement is a true game changer for our sport: A professional network of GFF-Scotiabank Academy Training Centres that will operate alongside our Member Associations to develop the game in a coordinated way, all over the country. It has never been done before. With this programme, the GFF is putting our nation in the vanguard of youth football development in the Caribbean – where it belongs.

It is the first time in our history that the best players – boys and girls – in each of our nine Member Associations will train together under a consistent coaching, technical

and tactical plan delivered by professionals under the umbrella of a carefully designed national football philosophy.

This will be accomplished via a network of GFF Technical Development Officers and Youth Development Coaches working with our Member Associations to create a golden era for football.

The aims are simple, we wish to:

- get more children into football
- scour the country to find new talent
- and to better prepare players for the demands of international football

This is towards the goal of enabling Guyana and its footballers to truly shine on the global stage.

I want to encourage our new Technical Development Officers and Youth Development Coaches to embrace their new roles with passion and commitment. You each have an exciting journey ahead of you as you help us deliver this programme. It is a big responsibility but we have every faith in you. We know you will do a fantastic job. We know the boys and girls in your respective regions, who share your passion for football, will thrive and grow under your guidance. It is an exciting time for football and it starts with you – inspiring our young people to achieve their dreams.

This heavy focus on youth development is at the heart of our vision. It is the kind of strategy that has produced the best teams and players in the more successful Football nations across the globe. We believe it is the only strategy for success. The GFF Executive Committee of the Guyana Football Federation Inc. sees its elected mandate as a solemn duty to this nation's children to:

- invest in and support our youth
- get more children involved in sport
- search for talent across the nation
- and to develop same in a consistent and sustained way.

This, towards giving our young people the chance to reach their potential. This has to be the foundation of our work. The GFF Executive Committee, on coming into office in 2015, made a promise to transform the way football works in Guyana for the better:

- to restore respect and much-needed stability to the sport
- to invest our resources responsibly where they should be invested
- and above all, to deliver a credible strategy of positive change after a difficult period.

That was our mandate, and we are making it happen. It is our aim:

- to take Guyana to the top of the Caribbean rankings

- to make football the most respected and most successful sport in Guyana and
- to work towards the ultimate goal of qualifying for a FIFA World Cup

We are already making progress. Since 2015, the Executive Committee and our Member Associations have been hard at work laying strong foundations for the future:

- Guyana's first nationwide U-17 youth league with the invaluable support of another great sponsor NAMILCO, which will now feed into our academy system to create a clear pathway to the national teams.
- Guyana's first women's football development league, which will also feed into our academy and
- Talent that has arguably been neglected for far too long has been accessed through support from the Ministry for Indigenous Peoples' Affairs. I am pleased to say that four of our 13 youth academy centres will focus on Hinterland communities. As you know, three boys from these communities recently made the final cut of the recent U-15 internationals.

Football belongs to everybody in Guyana and that diversity enriches us all. I believe it is because of this kind of visible and tangible progress that we have been able to attract more commercial partners to help us move forward. Rebuilding trust in football is crucial, and there is still much to be done but the GFF Executive Committee remains steadfast in its resolve.

We are grateful for the faith that the private sector, the Government and our Member Associations have shown in us as we reform football from top to bottom. We are grateful for the strong support that FIFA and CONCACAF have shown. We need as many people and organizations as possible from all backgrounds to stand with us as we build a brighter, better future for football. It is in the interest of our nation, and most importantly, our young people.

We know the most effective way to do this is through action, not words:

- Putting the interests of the sport, the players and Guyana first
- Transforming football into a professional and stable environment
- Laying the foundations for a successful future

The GFF-Scotiabank Academy Training Centres will propel us towards these goals. Through this partnership, our young people now have a chance to be the best they can be and we have the chance to transform the fortunes of our game and the lives of our young players for many years to come. We hope this sets an example and a precedent for others – companies and individuals – to join the GFF and its Member Associations on our journey. Take a look at the progress we are making and come on board. Football has the potential to be the number one sport in Guyana for many years to come.

In football, as in life, we can only make real progress through working together. It is "One Team, One Dream" and we want to share that dream with you.

Today marks a giant leap towards realizing that dream of success as we embark on a new era of hope for football in Guyana. I want to wish the best of luck to all of our new Technical Development Officers, Youth Development Coaches, and to the boys and girls who will bring the Academy Training Centres to life across the nation. I hope to see many of you making our country proud on the international stage. This is your chance to shine: Seize it.

Rest assured, the GFF, our Member Associations and partners will be with you every step of the way.

One Team, one Dream.