



GUYANA FOOTBALL FEDERATION INC.

Affiliated to FIFA, CONCACAF and CFU

MESSAGE FROM GFF PRESIDENT WAYNE FORDE AHEAD OF THE 2018 FIFA WORLD CUP™:

“OUR PLAN IS FOR GUYANA TO QUALIFY FOR THE WORLD CUP”

As a lifelong football fan and player, nothing beats the thrill of the FIFA World Cup. There's no escaping the fever. My wife can attest: the whole tournament consumes me: cultures, people and countries coming together in a unique celebration of the world's greatest sport.

But, every four years, it pains me to have to find a second nation to cheer for, rather than my beloved Golden Jaguars. When we look across the Caribbean, Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago have experienced World Cup magic first hand, but Guyana has never come close.

I think it's only fair to ask why.

We have the talent – all 83,000 square miles of it. We have an unrivalled passion for football, from the Rupununi to Berbice and we have the burning ambition.

But, let's be honest: Guyana has not invested in a structured, responsible way over any sustained period into developing our young players, coaches or football infrastructure. We've often looked for quick fixes instead of the tough work of meaningful change. Politics, mismanagement, bad luck, vested interests – there has always been an excuse.

It is my goal, as President of the Guyana Football Federation, to change all of that. I want to lay the foundations now, so that we can savour that FIFA World Cup magic. The tournament's expansion in 2026 is our best opportunity to qualify: we must seize it.

It will take teamwork and patience: everyone putting aside their differences, and getting behind the GFF's plans to develop the game.

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The GFF has the mandate to lead, and we reasonably expect all stakeholders to support us and to play fair as we build for the future. We owe this much to the fans and players.

First, we have to be realistic about where we are.

While we have the talent, Guyana has never been able to consistently turn this talent into players and coaches that can compete at a higher level. The lack of a proper national football programme has fuelled this failure. So how are we going to succeed?

We all want a quick fix, but there is none. This is about raising standards in a sustainable way, one step at a time, through the GFF's national football programme.

We've started by rebuilding the image and credibility of football.

We recently returned the Federation to full financial and governance compliance with FIFA – a huge achievement that means we can now access full funding for football, up to five million United States Dollars every four years. With FIFA's and CONCACAF's full support, we have a chance to build a lasting legacy of change.

We have already launched Guyana's first nationwide youth development programme – the Academy Training Centre system with professionally-taught coaches to train our girls and boys. It's a core part of our National Football Programme– a structured, long-term plan modelled on global best practice.

We are growing the number of young footballers through free, weekly nationwide grassroots sessions. We have set up intra-association U15 and U17 leagues and a women's development league. Further youth leagues are also in the works to build Guyana's first full structure of sustained annual competition.

Our programme creates a clear player pathway and playing philosophy, from grassroots to national teams.

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Players in this system know how to play the “Guyana way”, so they can slot into the national system, change formations with ease and perform more effectively in competition. It’s not always about forcing all the best players and the biggest personalities into a team; it’s about building a squad that works together – just look at the way Iceland performed at Euro 2016.

We are working hard to train more qualified local coaches – coaches that can guide our players to their full professional potential. We now have 30 certified coaches in Guyana, from next to none, from just a few years ago. The expertise and support of our new National Senior Men’s Head Coach Michael Johnson – a UEFA Pro Licence holder – will help to improve local coaching standards.

We also need some proper football infrastructure. Is it any wonder we have struggled to grow with inadequate facilities? Thanks to FIFA funds, the GFF is building our first dedicated national football centre at Providence: our mecca of football. The positive psychological impact this will have for players, coaches and fans is impossible to measure.

With FIFA funding, we will provide each Regional Member Association with an all-weather playing surface, an office and resources to properly manage the game.

This structured, long-term national programme is the only way we can build a national team that can compete for 2026 FIFA World Cup qualification. I have set the GFF ambitious targets, and we are working tirelessly every day to achieve them. It will take time, but it will be worth it. We have the full support of FIFA and CONCACAF to reform and develop the game. I know we have the support of every football fan in Guyana.

As you kick back with a cold beer to enjoy the matches in Russia, know that Guyana is moving forward. Know that – despite the challenges – we are investing responsibly to change the fortunes of our football forever. Come 2026, I believe the Golden Jaguars will roar on the greatest stage of all.

8th June, 2018

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