

## India under-16 footballers on US trip

As the Indian under-16 football team leaves for the US on a four-week exposure trip, technical director Colin Toal feels the tour will help the boys prepare for the finals of the Asian Football Federation (AFC) Championship in Uzbekistan in October.

The 24-member squad along with six officials will leave early Tuesday morning for a tour of West Virginia where the team will play seven practice matches.

'The U-16 team did very well to qualify for the AFC Championship. They are an important part of our development programme but it is equally important for us to recognise that it is just a part of the whole process. Fans across the country are beginning to see a ray of hope in them,' said Toal.

He went on to add that out of 35 players in the camp the list for the tour to US was pruned to 24 and it was difficult task for him.

'These players were spotted by our coaches during the National U-16 tournament last year. It is important for us to be consistently working to improve the quality of all our squads every year,' he said.

On the team's chance in the final round, Toal said: 'This is something I have not really thought about. We are much more interested in making sure that the development and improvement we saw last year is carried on in 2008. If we can do this successfully then, I hope, the results will take care of themselves.'

'I would just like to add that I want the boys going to Uzbekistan to really enjoy the tournament. What they do not need is the pressure mounting on them due to the importance of the tournament. They are, after all, just 16 year old boys!' he said.

The squad:

Players: Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, Raegan Albarnas, Ashish Chetri, Vishal Kumar Ravindra Kumar, Akshay Vimal Kumar Mall, Harpreet Bedi, Shallum Pires, Jayanta Paul, Ashfaq Ali, Deepak Devrani, Ravi Kumar, Sumit Rawat, Taranjit Kumar, Tanmoy Ghosh, Bikramjit Singh, Biru Yadav, Milan Singh, R.Lalrindika, Subhojit Majumdar, Tirthankar Sarkar, Abhishek Das, Malsawmfela, Manandeep, Prem Kumar.

Officials: Ankur Dutta (manager), Tanumoy Basu (goalkeeper coach), Sanjoy Sen (assistant coach), Chandru Jayaraman (physiotherapist), Narayana Menon (assistant coach), Colin Toal (technical director /chief coach).

The Fixture:

July 6: India Vs Metro FC

July 7: India Vs NCAA Blast FC

July 12: India Vs West Virginia

July 13: India Vs Columbia United

July 18: India Vs WV, Olympic Development Team

July 19: India Vs WV, Olympic Development Team

July 24: India Vs WV, West Virginia United

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