

## UNIVERSAL CHILDREN’S DAY - REMEMBERING THE PROMISE

Former Argentine player and Coach, César Luis Menotti once said “Football is a game of freedom, vision and feelings. Football makes me happy. When I get onto a football pitch and a football is at my feet then I must play. The stadium is a place for creativity.” Such freedom, vision, creativity and feelings were on display when Karachi United Football Club (KUFC) entertained Street Strikers Football Club in a match organized by Azad Foundation (AF) in cooperation with UNICEF at PAD Ground Clifton, Karachi on 21 December 2012.



This match was organized in accordance with Universal Children’s Day celebrated every year across the globe to honor the rights of the younglings to groom them for the responsibility of carrying their nations in future. This match was a part of Azad Foundation’s Sports for Development strategy adopted to support its Outreach Programme in accordance with UNCRC article#31 for providing healthy sports and games opportunities to this most underprivileged group.

KUFC’s team comprised of Under 16 children engaged in their regular ongoing coaching program whereas it was only the



second competitive outing for Street Strikers FC, a team comprising of children connected with streets of Karachi. Mr. Habib Ullah volunteered for the role of match referee.



Even before the start, the match was tipped to be a direct contest between KUFC’s attack v/s the goal keeper of SSFC. In a fast and thrilling encounter, Salman Nasir playing as GK for the first time, despite getting very little help from his inexperience defenders, relived Mark Lawrenson’s quote “If you’re a goalkeeper, it doesn’t matter what you save the ball with - if you keep it out, it’s not a goal”. KUFC’s quick

movements on the ball and off the ball clearly indicated the importance of regular practice at a young age.

They tested Salman's skills on numerous occasions throughout the match. Although



Salman's heroics were insufficient to salvage his team, his performance gave a lot of confidence to his team mates as they unexpectedly bagged two good goals from quick counter attacks.



Football in its entirety is not just about the players and the officials. The cheering, booing, emotions from the crowd are a necessity for making football matches spectacular. This match was also a treat as

amongst the beats of music and colorful banners, nearly 300 personnel from different walks of life enjoyed this match. The crowd encouraged both teams to put in their best and was rewarded by some great performances from the players.

At half time, the participants were entertained by some exciting juggling skills by a young player from KUFC's squad. The match was covered by several electronic



and print media. They interviewed players from both teams. The children expressed how much they have enjoyed playing this match and against each other.

Ovais Rehmat, captain of SSFC, speaking with the media said "Today was a special occasion for us. It was exciting to see the support and encouragement given by everyone, even when we lost the game. I can't promise that we will win each and every game but I can certainly assure that winning will always be the only thing in our minds whenever we go out to play from now on".



Mr. Afaq Durrani, Director Sports KMC along with Mr. Naveed Hassan Khan, CEO Azad Foundation and Mr. Syed Itfan

Maqbool, Head of Programme Azad Foundation, presented shields among the players from both teams and encouraged them to carry on their good work. Syed Ali Bilgrami, Programme Manager Azad Foundation thanked the participants for sparing their time to support the children connected with Streets and ensured that Azad Foundation will keep on organizing such activities and events that will promote the awareness on the issues of children connected with streets and pave way for their development.

