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THE AGE  
DELHI

After cricket, it's time for T20 football with amateur players, between 14 and 30, kicking up a footie storm in a 15-minute game



# IPL success kicks off T20 football campaign

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THE ASIAN AGE

In a country like India where cricket is a religion for many, it is tough for any other game to command strong popularity. However, times and tastes are changing, and many sports lovers are now looking beyond cricket and showing interest in several other games. In order to promote and encourage football among youngsters, a new footie format, called T20 football campaign, is being organised across the country where amateur players between the age group of 14 to 30 can register and play. Can a campaign designed to popularise football make a difference? We find out.

The organisers of this initiative feel that the unwavering loyalty towards cricket won't change overnight, but there are youngsters who have started following football internationally. Homi Battiwalla, EVP, Colas, Hydration & Mango Based Beverages, PepsiCo India, says, "We have tweaked the international format of football and made it more fast paced. The T20 football has two teams playing a 15-minute game. The matches are held in popular hangouts, and in spite of the ongoing IPL, people have taken out time to watch these matches. We are trying to generate interest at a grassroots level, and an international



football coach will train the final winners after conclusion of this competition."

Anadi Barua, technical director of Ashoka Football academy and selector of young football players, says that even though there are talented young football players, we need to hone them to compete at the global level. He says, "Currently we have Tata Arsenal Football Cup, Manchester United Premier Cup, Mahindra Cup and a few other tournaments to encourage youth participation in this game. But so far foot-

ball has only picked up in Kolkata, Goa and now slowly it is catching up in Delhi. There should be more promotions to endorse football."

Abhishek Joshi, a blogger and sports lover, feels that we need more iconic football players in India to popularise the game. He says, "Every young boy wants to play cricket because it has glamour and moolah, whereas football lacks that in India. We need icons to emulate, more than Bhatia and Chettri, we need our own football heroes. The second oldest football tournament in the world is organised in India and yet there is hardly any buzz. Football needs its stars, there is youth that follows it ardently and you can spot kids wearing premiership jerseys in every tier-two town."

A lot depends on how a tournament is marketed and advertised among the youth, feels Nikhil Wason, an IT professional and avid football fan. He says, "I'm not sure if this will increase the popularity of football in India. IPL is so popular not only because it is cricket, but partly also because of the hype and glamour attached to. Doing something like that for football may help increase its popularity in India."

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ABHISHEK JOSHI  
BLOGGER