

From the President

We are yet again at the close of another football season. One which we never thought would have been a possibility yet alone a success. Certainly our resolve has been put to the ultimate test and I am pleased to say that we have proven ourselves resilient against demanding odds.

After the onslaught of Hurricane Ivan on September 11th and 12th 2004 and the damage left to the Island's football facilities in its wake no one could have imagined that football would rise like the proverbial phoenix from the ash.

The devastation that followed robbed many of their homes and prized possessions, but thankfully no lives or loved ones were lost. With our main office down for several months and only reopening in January, looking back the past eight months has been an undoubted success. Even with all our plans for the 2004-05 season thrown askew we were still able to run a competitive season and close out with a well attended awards presentation ceremony.

Our determination, as a football family, to get some form of recreation going resulted in the 2005 Foster's League, the Admiral Youth and U14 Leagues, the CIFA Women's League and our first annual Beach Football Tournament. Disaster pulled from us a collective determination to conquer defeat and emerge stronger and better individuals. Football gave us another avenue to vent whatever frustrations may have existed and for still so many continues to challenge them daily.

Refreshing and encouraging was the renewal of confidence in CIFA by Cayman's corporate community. Large and small organizations alike have never failed to support us and rallied around us through renewed and novel sponsorship for both the past and coming football seasons. World Football administrator FIFA provided relief funding that assisted in getting our office back up and running with new furniture and computer equipment, while long standing



partner Foster's Food Fair and by extension Progressive Distributors stood by us in an effort to get the senior men's league going in February. A few weeks later Admiral Administrations Ltd. joined us as the title sponsor for

the U17 Youth league and negotiations are currently under way with two of Cayman's major banking and telecom leaders for other leagues and competitions.

Our most monumental and outstanding achievement this past year however, was the signing of a 99 year peppercorn lease agreement with the Minister of Community Services, Youth, Sports and Gender Affairs Dr. the Hon. Frank McField, on behalf of the Cayman Islands Government. The lease which, was signed at our first annual Youth Football Rally in June of 2004, transferred 17.5 acres of land in Spotts Newlands to the Cayman Islands Football Association for the building of our National Training Center Facility. A dream which has been long in coming has finally been realized and we are now that much closer to breaking ground later this year.

Former National Team captain and veteran football player Lee Ramoon was honoured on January 29th when former FIFA Player of the Year and African Player of the Century George Weah visited Cayman to present him with his CIFA Order of Merit. During my address, I suggested that in order to score goals at his farewell match scheduled for June 11th, 2005 in Marseille, France George should include Lee in his special select team. Before closing the evening George agreed and invited Lee to participate. He later traveled to France and was privileged to join football greats such as Weah, Zinedine Zidane, Andriy Shevchenko and Didier Drogba on the

field for Weah's final appearance as a professional football player.

Our Cayman Vasco da Gama Player Exchange Program continues to grow from strength to strength. With the main objective of providing international experience and exposure for our young players as well as opportunities for academic and/or athletic scholarships we have already been witness to encouraging results. Of the three players that initially participated in last summer's exchange program with Vasco, Joseph Tatum has already secured an academic scholarship with St. Georges Prep School in Rhode Island USA and in July traveled to Europe for tryouts with prominent professional clubs the likes of Club Bruges, Anderlec and Gent. We also welcomed 18 year old Diego Cunha from Vasco da Gama to the Cayman Islands in March and sent three more of our own young players, David Bodden Jr., Dave McLaughlin and Tevon Levien, to represent us in Brazil in July.

Our annual Youth Football Rally went forward on July 2nd as scheduled. Even with the rain threatening to put a damper on the event some 250+ children, plus their parents and friends as well as MLAs Osbourne Bodden and Lucille Seymour turned out to support the event. Though the sky opened and the rains came the kids were team players and continued to enjoy the scheduled events. Eight teams were awarded parade winners for their neat and tidy attire and for parading despite the rain. Later Future FC took home the U12 girls rally award while St. Ignatius and East End took home the boys U12 and U23 rally awards respectively.

Following an extensive review of the national program CIFA in conjunction with the national and district coaches have

determined that our focus should be geared towards younger players in an effort to effectively prepare for international tournaments over the next decade. The national program has therefore been restructured, terminating the pro-social agent agreement to reflect this. We have since been successful in commencing our under 23 domestic league. The league will act as a bridge for the Under 17's between the Under 17 league and the national senior program.

As we look forward to the coming season our plans include not only the ground breaking for our National Training Facility, which in and of itself will be one of our most impressive projects to date, but also our fundraising black tie dinner, initiatives to revamp our referee training and evaluation programs as well as a drive to attract more long term sponsors to the football family.

In closing, I must take this opportunity to extend special thanks to FIFA and CONCACAF who have been and continue to be of tremendous assistance and guidance to us throughout the years but especially over the past year, our sponsors – Progressive Distributors, Foster's Food Fair, Martinizing and Admiral Administrations, The Ministry of Community Services, Youth, Sports and Gender Affairs, The Department of Youth and Sports, our dedicated volunteers, referees, and members. We are proud to call ourselves a family and to have the support both of that family and the wider community in general.

Jeffrey Webb

President

Cayman Islands Football Association