

[an error occurred while processing this directive]

Low graphics | Accessibility help

BBC
NEWS

Watch One-Minute World News

News services

Your news when you want it



News Front Page



Africa

Americas

Asia-Pacific

Europe

Middle East

South Asia

UK

England

Northern Ireland

Scotland

Wales

UK Politics

Education

Magazine

Business

Health

Science &
Environment

Technology

Last Updated: Tuesday, 24 August, 2004, 05:01 GMT 06:01 UK

E-mail this to a friend

Printable version

Asian footballers eye the big time

By the BBC's Nick Davis

Players from across the UK have been taking part in the AsiaEurope Football Festival, which aims to give Asian players the chance to impress the major clubs.



Few Asian players have made their mark at the highest level

There are only five South Asian professionals in the country and an equally small number in management, but a new football academy plans to change that and get more people involved in the game.

Every weekend there are thousands of people who turn out for the Asian amateur leagues all over the UK, but the numbers fall dramatically when it comes to being a professional.

The AsiaEurope festival, hosted by Liverpool Hope University

SEE ALSO:

- Report critical over racism
10 Feb 04 | Football
- Ethnic soccer league scores
04 Feb 04 | South West Wales
- Premiership eyes Asian players
08 Aug 03 | Merseyside

RELATED BBC LINKS:

- Asian footballers

RELATED INTERNET LINKS:

- AsiaEurope Football Festival
- Liverpool Hope University College

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external internet sites

TOP UK STORIES

- Major manhunt for Afghan soldier
- Unemployment dips to 2.47 million
- PM condemns sympathy for Moat



College at the weekend, was all about showing scouts and coaches the depth of talent in the south Asian community, despite the lack of role models in the game.

One hopeful, Yousef, came down from Glasgow. He had played on the youth team of a Scottish professional club.

"Football means life to me. I've played it all my life, it's my passion," he said.

Kamal, also from Glasgow, said he was looking to get a contract, but reckons you need more than a love of the game to get ahead.

"I'm trying to look for a club. It's quite hard, what you've got to go through to get into the pros," he said.

“ I don't know if it's cultural discrimination or if they're just rubbish ”

Festival player

"Coaches always have their favourites to play and they don't give Asians a chance."

Discrimination?

Another player in the competition gave a more stark opinion.

"I don't know if it's cultural discrimination or if they're just rubbish," he said.

Whatever the reason, festival organiser Majid Lavji acknowledged the progress of Asians in breaking into the professional ranks has stalled.

"Asian football is at the same place that black football was back in the 70s, so it will take time. But different other groups

have started programmes up and down the country too," he said.

A number of Premiership clubs sent scouts, including ones from the red and blue teams of the Merseyside.

Alan Johnson, Everton's race and diversity promotions manager, said: "Technically some of the players are very, very good. Football has a responsibility to ... go into the communities by coaching and teaching [and] I think that'll happen."

Liam Higgins, a Liverpool community coach, agrees: "We're trying to make appearances at these events to show there is an interest. We want to see these players in games."

A number of people at the event said that racism was not an issue - and neither was a lack of talent when it comes to recruiting Asian players.

They said it is the players themselves who are not interested.

Career pressure

Sajj from Manchester said: "As Asians we're often pushed towards being doctors or going into computers rather than sports. That's the major barrier."

A new degree programme at Liverpool Hope University might change that. The institution plans to offer a course aimed at putting more young Asian men and women into the game.

“ We're often pushed towards being doctors or going into computers rather than sports ”

Sajj, Manchester

Bill Chambers helped set it up. "Although a lot of these players are good they may not end up playing at clubs, but they could go into the administration of them.

"What we're trying to do is get them a proper degree, a good education giving them experience with clubs and running the AsiaEurope league."

Festival organiser Mr Lavji agrees. " Events like this will encourage more people to go in work within football, [including within] the day to day running of the game."

 [E-mail this to a friend](#)

 [Printable version](#)

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

[E-mail news](#) **[Mobiles](#)** **[Alerts](#)** **[News feeds](#)** **[Podcasts](#)**

[News Front Page](#) | [Africa](#) | [Americas](#) | [Asia-Pacific](#) | [Europe](#) | [Middle East](#) | [South Asia](#)
[UK](#) | [Business](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Science/Nature](#) | [Technology](#) | [Health](#)
[Have Your Say](#) | [In Pictures](#) | [Week at a Glance](#) | [Country Profiles](#) | [In Depth](#) | [Programmes](#)