Awang Sabtu to coach Under-19 squad

By Arfandi Jaafar

KOTA KINABALU: Former head coach of the Sabah President Cup squad, Awang Sabtu Jamil has been appointed as head coach for the state Under-19 squad.

Awang will lead the U-19 squad to the 2012 National Youth Cup Football Championship, to be held at Universiti Utara Malaysia in Sintok, Kedah from May 1-14.

Awang, who led the President Cup team to their championship title in 1996, will be joined by Licence B holder, Jumat Jimmy, as assistant coach, while former state women's team goalkeeper coach, Jasri Jabidin will assume duties as goalkeeper coach for the U-19 squad.

The three coaches will conduct their duties under the watchful eyes of team manager, Ahmad Syuaib Nasir, who has gained trust from the FA for his accomplishments in leading local outfits, Quilmes FC and Bandaraya Kota Kinabalu FC at several local tournaments in recent years.

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According to the Sabah Football Association (Safa), Awang and his squad of youth players will commence their centralised training on Monday (April 23) at the Kota Kinabalu Sports Complex.

From the 31 candidates that were selected during the recent selection trials, 25 have been shortlisted to join the team's final stage training stint, which will be ongoing until April 30.

The players who made the cut include three from Kota Kinabalu, while some are from Tuaran, Tamparuli, Menggatal, Inanam, Putatan and Penampang.

Safa also took pride in unearthing some talents from Sandakan, Pitas, Kota Marudu, Tenom and Keningau.

As preparation for the national championship next month, several friendly matches have been organised to help gel the players together and to give the team the edge in facing other state teams at the prestigious event.

The first test for the U-19 squad was a match against Quilmes FC, yesterday, while their next challenge will be to take on the Sabah President Cup squad at the Likas Stadium at 4pm on Sunday.

Sabah have been drawn in Group C in the national championship, along with host team, Kedah and neighbouring state Sarawak.

Meanwhile, Safa would like to record its thanks and appreciation to some of the team's sponsors, namely GraceOne Sdn Bhd and Petrohub Sdn Bhd.

It hopes that other private sector companies or individuals would also come forward to support the U-19 team.