



Apollo Tyres and Manchester United launch *United We Play* programme to encourage young Indian football talent

- **First of its kind pan-India initiative for footballing talent to come to the fore**
- **Identified participants to be trained by MUSS coaches**
- **Programme culminates with Man Utd U-18 team's first visit to India**
- **Best performers of *United We Play* programme to train with the U-18 squad**

Mumbai, India, January 20: Leading tyre maker, Apollo Tyres, the Global Tyre Partner to Manchester United, launched the *United We Play* programme to encourage young football talent from across the country. Talented kids will be trained by the Manchester United Soccer School (MUSS) coaches, with the best performers receiving once in a lifetime opportunity to train with the Manchester United's U-18 team, which will be visiting India for the first time in May this year.

Ronny Johnsen, ex-Manchester United centre back and midfielder, who has won 4 League titles (1997, 1999, 2000 and 2001), one FA Cup (1999) and one UEFA Champions League (1999) with the club, launched the '*United We Play*' programme along with **Rajesh Dahiya**, Vice President, Marketing, Sales and Service (India, SAARC & Oceania), Apollo Tyres Ltd in Mumbai, India.

The *United We Play* programme will be held in two age groups -- U-13 and U-16 -- in Delhi, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Goa, Kolkata, Guwahati, Chennai and Bengaluru in the next two months, with around 3000 young footballers expected to take part. The initial programme will be run by local coaches, before the young footballers get a chance to impress coaches from the Manchester United Soccer School (MUSS). During this stage of the programme, participants will be taught some of the same skills and techniques imparted at Manchester United.

The 32 best performers, selected by the MUSS coaches from across the country, will congregate in Mumbai to participate in two training sessions with the Manchester United U-18 squad, who for the first time, will be visiting India on tour later this year.

Speaking at the launch of the programme, **Rajesh Dahiya, Vice President, Marketing, Sales and Service (India, SAARC & Oceania), Apollo Tyres Ltd** said "We have been working towards development of football at the grassroot level in India, which helps us interact and engage with the community both at the rural and urban centres. Inviting the Manchester United's U-18 team, which has been identifying and providing a steady stream of players to the United's first team, to visit India, is a part of our continuous engagement with the Indian football fans".



Manchester United's Director of Partnerships, Sean Jefferson, commented "Manchester United has a longstanding relationship with India, hosting five #ILOVEUNITED events there since 2016 as well as creating bespoke content on our club channels for our millions of Indian fans and followers. We have seen a massive increase in the popularity of football in India over the last few years. As a club we want to encourage this enthusiasm for the game by engaging with initiatives like Apollo Tyres' 'United We Play' programme."

Manchester United's Head of Academy, Nick Cox, said "The Under 18's cultural visit to India is an important part of the squads training. It allows our youth players to experience what it is like to travel as a team to countries, they may have never visited before, meeting the club's global fans and experiencing cultures and climates very different to their own."

In addition to being the Global Tyre Partner of Manchester United Football Club, Apollo Tyres, in India, has a presence in Indian Super League (ISL), being the principal sponsor of Chennaiyin FC, and in the I-League, with its title sponsorship of Punjab FC, while in Hungary, the company has an association with DVTK, the leading sports club in the country. In the past, company also had a presence in German Bundesliga, with its association with Borussia Monchengladbach.

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For further details, please contact:

AYONAVA BAGCHI, +91 98187 74606, ab@youngmonk.in

ROHIT SHARAN, +91 124 2721000, rohit.sharan@apollotyres.com