

Sesa Football Academy Trial Footfall Sees Uptick After Stellar 2023-24 Season

Following an extraordinary 2023-24 football season, which witnessed the Sesa Football Academy (SFA) achieve significant milestones, the academy is now gearing up for an even more ambitious 2024-25 season. SFA, the flagship CSR initiative of Vedanta Sesa Goa continues to affirm its status as a premier institution for nurturing football talent in India.

With a distinctly Goan identity, SFA remains steadfast in its commitment to realizing the full potential of Goan football. The academy is dedicated to creating new opportunities for aspiring footballers from the state, with a clear focus on benefiting as many local boys and girls as possible.

In anticipation of the upcoming season, SFA's focus has been on building upon its strengths as well as in plugging the gaps. The support staff at SFA has meticulously assembled core teams that have been scouting for talent. These efforts are designed not only to maintain but also to elevate the academy's standing, ensuring even greater success in the season ahead.

As part of the process, the trials for the new intake of footballers at SFA were conducted over a period of a month and a half, attracting more than 500 aspiring players from across Goa and beyond. These trials offered young talents the chance to earn a coveted place in one of SFA's prestigious teams, which include the Senior Men's Team, U-19 Team, U-15 Team, and U-13 Team. The fierce competition during the trials augurs well for SFA and is also indicative of the interest generated due to SFA's break out season and the promotion to I-League 3. The footfall witnessed an uptick of 7-10% from the previous years.

Speaking about the upcoming season, **Charles Dias, Head Coach at SFA**, remarked, *"We are thrilled with the level of talent we've seen during this year's trials. The passion and dedication displayed by these young footballers are truly inspiring. As we prepare for the 2024-25 season, our focus is on honing their skills and building a cohesive team that can uphold SFA's proud tradition of excellence."*

In the 2023-24 season, the SFA Senior Men's Team in the Goa Pro League 2023-24 Top Tier, secured its maiden runners-up finish and also a coveted spot in the I-League 3, which is scheduled to commence in September 2024. Key players from the SFA Senior Men's Team also played a crucial role in the Goa State Team's journey to a runner-up finish at the Santosh Trophy earlier this year. Additionally, the U-19 Team emerged as runners-up in the GFA U-19 Division I-League 2023-24, while the U-15 and U-17 teams both secured third positions in their respective divisions of the GFA U-15 and U-17 Division I-Leagues.

The new selections made this season are expected to build on these accomplishments and help the academy achieve even greater success in the upcoming season. With a refreshed roster that includes a new goalkeeper, two defenders, three strikers, and four midfielders for the Senior Men's Team, along with the formation of a new U-15 team, SFA is poised to continue its upward trajectory. These meticulously assembled teams reflect SFA's unwavering commitment to nurturing football talent and providing young athletes with the optimal environment to develop their potential.

Gavin Araujo, Technical Director, SFA, commented, *"The 2023-24 season set a high standard for us, and we are fully committed to surpassing it in the upcoming season, especially with the I-League 3 just around the corner. Our aim is to continue providing top-tier training and opportunities for our players, helping them grow both on and off the field. We look forward to seeing the new teams in action and are confident that they will make us proud."*

As Sesa Football Academy gears up for the 2024-25 season, it remains dedicated to its mission of fostering football talent at the grassroots level and contributing to the development of the sport in Goa and beyond. Sesa Football Academy, since 1999, is contributing to community development through SFA by opening newer avenues for the youth through Football, while also ensuring their socio-economic development. So far, it has produced 183+ graduates and 11 have played for the Indian Football team with 10-15 represented various ISL clubs. It is one of the only few residential academies in the state and among the top corporate football academies in India, providing in-house Gym, Canteen, Recreation Room, TV Room, Full Size Natural Pitch, Tutors for Tuitions, Best-In Class Training, and Insurance Cover. It has promoted football among women & girls through the set-up of the football centres at Amona and Bicholim. It has been successfully collaborating with the Goa Football Association to organise the Vedanta Women's League (VWL) over the last 7 seasons.