

SPORTS

Al Hail's cricket infrastructure ready for grand official opening

Known for his dedication and commitment for the game of cricket Moula Bakhsh Al Balushi, who formed Al Hail Cricket Team to promote the game among locals, has finally realised his dream of developing a good cricket infrastructure

MUSCAT: Over the past one year Oman's impressive show on world stage has lured many in the Sultanate to take up cricket, while Oman Cricket too is making attempts to take the game to far flung areas of the nation. →



BRAND NEW FACILITY: A view of Al Hail School of Cricket's lush-green ground with the net facilities in the background.

There's something concrete happening on the developmental front in places like Sohar, Nizwa as well as Salalah, all under the umbrella of the country's cricket governing body.

However, there is also one individual who is doing his bit for the game and richly deserves all the applause for single handedly developing a state-of-art cricket infrastructure, which is set for a grand official inauguration next month.

Known for his dedication and commitment to cricket, Moula Bakhsh Al Balushi, who formed his Al Hail Cricket Team to promote the game among locals, had the idea of developing a good infrastructure.

A dream then, his commitment with blessings from all quarters saw his vision turning true and now he is proud to have created the infra-

structure and practice facilities so that children are attracted to play cricket all round the year.

"Very soon we will have the pitches done," said Moula Baksh, adding that even seating arrangements and pavilion will take shape soon.

Currently, Moula Baksh has decided to lay an astro-turf pitch to begin action and the recently organised corporate cricket and Al Hail CT organised T10 tournament proved to be a grand success.

"We have organised some tournaments already, but are looking forward to host bigger events, starting from a T20 tournament in April," said Moula Baksh while speaking to Times Sport.

Bright future

Oman's excellent performance in

the World T20 tournament, which evoked rave reviews from around the globe, has also instilled curious interest among nationals in the Sultanate as well.

"With cricket in Oman flourishing, I am sure many are being lured to the game. The interest shown towards our Al Hail School of Cricket has grown in recent times and I visualise a bright future," Moula Baksh, who also hailed the achievements of the national cricket team and Oman Cricket, said.

With an initiative to develop cricket at the highest level in the Sultanate, Al Hail CT has come a long way since its inception in 2010.

According to Moula Baksh, Al Hail Cricket Team was started with the aim of giving opportunities to local talent who were playing earlier with other teams but with limited expo-

sure.

“Net practice facilities were earlier based only in Darsait and Wadi Kabir which is quite far for the people based in other far flung parts of Muscat. Thus, the club management thought of creating their own ground and practice facilities for players who cannot travel such long distances,” detailed Moula Baksh, the founder of Al Hail School of Cricket.

“Today, the club is well known and respected at every cricketing level in Oman, firmly establishing its footprint by emerging as champion in different divisions since 2010 in the Oman Cricket League,” he added.

“About a year ago in May 2013, the Ministry of Sports Affairs had held an exhibition on Sports in Oman where the Al Hail Cricket Team had put up a stall and showcased the

various activities and developmental programmes that the Al Hail Cricket Club has taken up for the betterment of the Omani players. The stall was visited by the Minister of Sports Affairs himself and he was very generous with his praise for our efforts,” he said.

Moula Baksh explained that his outfit with its enriching vision of developing cricket in the Sultanate, started with mere 15 members.

“The club has gone from strength to strength and now boasts of nearly 150 members including young as well as experienced Omani players. These players are fully supported by experienced expatriate players who assist in training them in the nets. With a firm eye on the ongoing development of the team and the young Omani players, the school has roped in some highly talented and experienced, professional expa-

triate players who have been entrusted a dual role of teaching the young Omani players the practical nuances of the game through live match situations,” he explained.

Al Hail CT launched its cricket academy (School of Cricket) in August 2014, whereby it had invited and continues to invite participation from kids of age 5 and above.

“With state-of-the-art facilities and professional coaches, the academy has also put its own team in Oman junior cricket league in 2015. The academy has already seen an increase in the number of members with most parents in Al Hail, Seeb, Al Khoud, Mawallah, Mabelah, Fanja, Barka and Bidiya adjacent areas sending their kids to train at the facility,” said Moula Baksh.

“We were able to build our own fa-

ilities in Mabellah thanks to the support from the Government and Ministry of Sports Affairs. The facility, which attracted fulsome praise from the inspection team consisting of ICC Global Development Manager Tim Anderson, Chairman ICC Associate & Affiliate Members Neil Speight, ICC Director Imran Khawja, Development officer Mohammed Iqbal Sikander and Chairman of Oman Cricket Kanak Khimji, Oman Cricket General Secretary Madhu Jesrani and other OC board members.

Omani youth

“Their visit happened on March 10, 2014, when the ground levelling was in progress and was a barren brown, but since then vast improvements have been made and what you see now is lush green outfield,” he detailed.

“The main ground is equipped with state-of-the-art floodlights for night matches and the main pitch has been laid out with astroturf. The practice nets boast of high quality white neon lights for comfortable night practice,” he said. “The School has recently acquired a bowling machine to aid in batting practice for all teams that would like to utilise these facilities.”

Moula Baksh also highlighted the need for honing the skills of Omani youth.

“We have entered into tie-ups with some specific organisations that come and conduct programmes for our young members to develop their interpersonal skills thereby helping them become better individuals. With cricket in mind, the school is also tying up with Omani schools where we can develop cricket at the grassroots level, nurturing budding

talents and thus creating awareness about cricket and also creating a much larger pool of players for the future,” he said.

Moula Baksh added to say: “The school has plans to develop the facility to meet global standards in the near future. The net facilities are open to all teams and corporates in Oman. Fielding practice sessions are also offered with the net practice facility which many teams desperately require and demand in Oman. Interested teams can also visit us at the venue or mail us on alhailcricketteam@yahoo.com to find out more.”

“The facilities will also be available for tournaments,” he signed off.



