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## XAVI EXPRESSES PRIDE IN QATAR'S FOOTBALLING PROGRESS AT ASPIRE4SPORT

**Al Sadd SC Star is one of the highlights during the first day of ASPIRE4SPORT and Global Summit on Football Performance & Science taking place in Amsterdam**

Spanish star of Al Sadd SC, Xavi Hernández today expressed his pride in the achievements of Aspire Academy and Qatar's progress in supporting the development of football.

He was speaking during a Star Chat at the Global Summit on Football Performance & Science hosted by Aspire Academy. The two-day event takes place at the iconic Amsterdam ArenA, home of AFC Ajax on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> October.

Describing how football is developing in Qatar in the lead up to the 2022 World Cup and the importance of Aspire Academy in supporting the progress of the national team, Xavi said: "In the same way I'm proud of Barcelona, I'm also very proud of the Academy in Doha. They have a lot of professionalism at Aspire, including all the coaches. I'm also learning a lot of things. They're always training. I think Aspire Academy is working very well, and the event they have organised here is incredible. The Academy and Qatar have a lot of solutions and are sharing them with the world."

He also described his affection for the country and its people by saying: "I live with my family there and I enjoy the country."

During the hour-long Star Chat, Xavi was joined by another former Barcelona great, Carles Puyol, in a discussion moderated by Al Kass presenter Marianne Karakalla. Together they discussed a wide range of topics including the secrets of La Masia and the number of world-class players it has produced, the influence of managers including Johan Cruyff, Louis Van Gaal and Pep Guardiola, and shared ideas on how best to develop young players.

In describing the role for an event like the Global Summit on Football Performance & Science in developing youth talent, Carles Puyol said: "It is very important. The methodology is crucial. I've only worked at Barcelona and it's important to stay within it. There are opportunities to learn from it every day. I understand that I always have to improve – when you are in the top league and humble enough you can always improve."

During the Star Chat, attended by hundreds of football experts and delegates, Xavi also highlighted the influence of Pep Guardiola and how his coaching methods improved him as a player by commenting: "Pep has made us all improve. He has a way of understanding football which is unique. In one or other way, he lets you understand how play progresses. He changed the way of defending by attacking. It's different and it is a very specific way of understanding football. Besides Johann Cruyff, Pep is the most important person in football during the last 50 years."



In the day's second Star Chat, Marc Overmars was joined by Ronald de Boer who also praised Aspire Academy and the role it is playing in Qatar and globally.

De Boer said: "It's crucial, players need to compete with the best players to improve. You always have to be tested. That's a problem we even find in Holland, if you want to be the best you need players at the highest level. We have too many players in the Dutch team from PSV, Feyenoord or Ajax. Look at Belgium, their starting eleven all play in the biggest leagues.

"That is why Aspire is very important. Football in Qatar is growing fast and the people love to see it there. But you can't start by building the roof, you have to start with the foundations and that is what Aspire is. We have to be patient. You can't have success overnight. But with effort you will succeed."

Both Star Chat sessions took place in front of an audience of representatives from more than 50 international clubs and federations and leagues who are taking part in the Global Summit on Football Performance & Science, held at the iconic Amsterdam ArenA, home of AFC Ajax.

More than 160 representatives from clubs including FC Barcelona, Manchester United, AC Milan and Juventus will take part in the Global Summit, making it one of the largest gatherings of its kind anywhere in the world. Together they will review and examine the latest training methods and approaches designed to nurture championship potential and support elite performance.

This group of experts – known as the **"Aspire in the World Fellows"** community – has developed rapidly since it was established in 2014. As well as regular gatherings in Doha and events in Europe to develop their ideas, members are supported by a cutting-edge online portal enabling the spread of best practice, trends and the latest thinking. Taken together, the various elements of the community's activity provide a powerful platform to support the broader development of football around the world.

Since it was launched, the community has continued to grow and develop, and for the first time this year the original members of the "Aspire in the World Fellows" were invited to extend invitations to affiliate clubs, meaning up to 80 football clubs are expected to attend the summit.

Running in parallel to the two-day Summit is the ASPIRE4SPORT event and networking session that brings European and Qatari sports industry professionals together to pave the way for future partnerships.

– ENDS –



## Notes to editors

### About Aspire Academy:

Since opening its doors in 2004, Aspire Academy for Sports Excellence has become one of the foremost national sports academies in the world. Working as part of the Aspire Zone Foundation - an international sport destination – Aspire Academy is at the heart of a sporting revolution currently taking place in Qatar and around the region. The Academy is conceiving, promoting and implementing game-changing excellence in sports training and elite athlete development that is enabling an entire generation of talented, disciplined and committed Qatari athletes to pursue their sporting dreams. Together with the other members of the Aspire Zone Foundation (Aspire Logistics and ASPETAR Qatar Orthopedic and Sports Medicine Hospital), Aspire Academy is developing sports champions, promoting healthy lifestyles and galvanizing the sports economy of today, and the future.

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### About the events

The two-day event ASPIRE4SPORT networking session brings European and Qatari sports industry professionals together to pave the way for future partnerships. In parallel, Aspire Academy is hosting the “Global Summit” on ‘Football Performance & Science’ to share ideas and approaches and discuss how science, technology and cutting-edge coaching techniques positively influence the game.

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ASPIRE4SPORT also features a business-to-business exhibition that will create a wide range of networking opportunities for European and Qatari sport industry professionals. A large number of Qatari and Middle Eastern government organisations and companies will attend the event to meet representatives from across Europe’s leading sports business sectors including construction, sports medicine, logistics, event management, communication and technology. Last year’s ASPIRE4SPORT



resulted in face-to-face talks between 148 international suppliers and 19 exhibitors resulting in 988 scheduled business meetings.