



## **Quick, touch me if you can**

By Arun Raj

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SPEED is the name of the game.

Add to that balance, agility and tactical acumen and you have a Touch Football player.

The Monsoon Touch Football Club is the first of its kind in Singapore - a purely Touch Football playing club.

President of the Club, Miles Darby, 46, who works as an IT project manager at an investment bank in Singapore, told The New Paper what the aim of forming such a club is: 'Well, I think we needed structure.

'Touch football suites all ages, shapes, and sizes, and all can enjoy playing the sport because many different levels are catered for - from social to serious, from young to not so young.

'The aim is to provide an environment for high performance, so individuals and teams can excel.'

Darby is from New Zealand and has been playing the sport in Singapore for over a decade at Turf City with his fellow team-mates as a member of the Touch team from the Wanderers Rugby Football Club.

Devon Wong, 31, an APAC sales support manager for an online payment services company, is club secretary, coach as well as captain of Monsoon Touch Football Club. He has also played the sport in New Zealand and was one of the

founding members of the team.

He talks about his aims for the team and Touch Rugby in Singapore: 'The club's aims are to build a high performance club to compete not only in Singapore, but also throughout the region.

'The local touch football scene has grown tremendously in the nine years that I have been in Singapore and I have been fortunate enough to be involved with its growth at all levels.

'I have seen the skill level rise as well as the eagerness within the local players to compete at the same level rise with it.

Social aspect

'I have also had the good fortune to play with very talented players who have become good friends and we share good times on and off the field. So the social aspect is a big plus.'

As soon as its first games in the new Summer Touch League were over the team made arrangements to meet for lunch at the nearby restaurant and grab a cold beer as well for good measure.

The sport is very much one that is not gender-biased. Monsoon Touch Football Club have seven teams - four men's and three women's teams as well as combined teams of men and women to take part in the mixed team events. The mixed team took apart the opposition in their first game by a score of 9-0.

'It was a great start for us, especially with that scoreline against a team that's supposed to be the second best in the league,' said Wong to his charges after the game.

Respectable

National touch player Haseena Allapitchay, 29, is a teacher and also a member of Monsoon Touch Football Club.

She has experience playing in the 2007 Touch Rugby World Cup held in Stellenbosch, South Africa - Singapore had sent two teams for the Women's Open and Mixed 30s events.

She played for the women's team which finished a very respectable fifth position out of the eight teams that took part.

'We're really looking forward to the next World Cup in 2011 for the National team but for Monsoon we're training for the sixth Asian Club Championships in Bangkok this June,' said Allapitchay.

The team, which had started with about 20 players two years ago in December, now has 100 registered players and they attribute their growth to new members watching them train and plan and wanting to join in the group to improve their game.

Tony Koh, 24 and a regular national serviceman, started playing touch rugby when he was in university as part of the inter-hall competitions.

However, his joining Monsoon was based on a chance meeting of the team at Turf City: 'I saw these guys playing and asked if I could join in and they did more than just welcome me. Now I play with them as regularly as possible and have never looked back.'

Indeed new members pay a nominal fee and get a spanking new jersey with student members given a discount.

Training every Tuesday night at Turf City, the sky is the limit for the Monsoon Touch Football Club who look like one of the most professionally run amateur sports clubs in Singapore.

To contact Monsoon Touch Football Club, email them at [info@monsoontouch.com](mailto:info@monsoontouch.com)