

NEW-LOOK GEYLANG PRIMED FOR 2013

SINGAPORE – Former Eastern giants Geylang United have reverted to their previous name Geylang International, and have also come up with a new logo and club philosophy as they plot their assault on the upcoming Great Eastern-Yeo's S-League season.

Head coach V Kanan has been tasked with a mid-table finish and he will have a squad featuring several new faces including Japanese forward Shotaro Ihata, national reserve goalkeeper Joey Sim, former Tanjong Pagar defender Delwinder Singh and ex-LionsXII winger Yasir Hanapi. Seven players from the club's Prime League squad have also been promoted to the S-League side.

"Even though we have a young team, if we believe in them and complement them with foreign players and mentors with good experience, we have reason to be very optimistic," said club chairman Leong Kok Fann. "By design and intention, we decided not to sign more mature players as I believe that the young players will not grow if we don't give them a chance."

Geylang will also award S\$2,500 annually to three S-League or Prime League players who have been accepted into any tertiary institution as co-payment for their school fees.

The club have also started a mentorship programme, where players from Singapore Management University would mentor 36 students from Bedok Secondary School.

Geylang were one of the top sides in the S-League's early years, winning the league championship in 1996 and 2001. But they have struggled in recent years to compete with the likes of SAFFC, Home United and Tampines Rovers. Last season, they finished 11th out of 13 teams.

Despite the club's new look, Leong remained cautious about their chances for the 2013 S-League season.

"Geylang International is a humble club with a humble budget," he said.

"We have to be up front with our players that we will only pay them competitive humble wages and we won't go out of our way to pay for a player we can't afford because we work within our means."

Nonetheless, former Balestier Khalsa custodian Joey Sim, 25, who was part of the Lions' triumphant AFF Suzuki Cup triumph last month, believes he has made the right choice to join the Eagles.

"I hope to play more, start more, and take my chances when they come. Training with the new signings and youngsters will also be better for my career in the long run."