

7 floorballers to train and compete with Swedish club

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In a bid to lift playing standards, the Singapore Floorball Association (SFA) will be sending seven national floorballers to Swedish top-tier club Pixbo IBK for a seven-month attachment.

Under the Singapore Floorball Overseas Training Programme, the seven players – six women and one man – will train and compete from September to March 2027 with the Molnlycke-based club, which is located just outside Gothenburg.

The attachment, which is fully funded by Sport Singapore (SportSG) and SFA, covers flights, accommodation, meals, training and insurance.

At the launch of the high-performance programme at SportSG's The Kallang headquarters on Aug 20, SFA president Ben Ow said the Swedish club was chosen after a six-month evaluation.

Pixbo's depth across age groups and levels and their openness to expanding beyond player placements into areas like coach development were seen as key to building a longer-term partnership.

The seven athletes are national women's team captain Shermaine Goh, Siti Khairul Anuar and Nicholas Chua, all 27, Jerelee Ong, 28, Foo Wen Xin, 24, Lim Jie Ying, 23, and Nur Yuanna Insyirah, 19.

They were selected after undergoing fitness tests and an interview process, with final recommendations made by SFA's coaches and technical director.

Lim and Yuanna will be on leave of absence (LOA) from school, while the rest of them, who are all working, will receive financial reimbursement through SportSG's spexGlow programme during their stint there.

The spexGlow (sport excellence, grant for loss of wages) scheme supports national athletes who take no-pay leave from their jobs to train or compete full time ahead of major competitions. Eligible athletes can receive up to \$3,000 a month, capped at 12 months in a financial year, to offset lost income while they focus on their sport.

Lim, who is pursuing a degree in information systems at Singapore Management University, said: "This is an amazing opportunity that SFA introduced to us and they provided me with a lot of support.



National floorballers (from left) Jerelee Ong, Foo Wen Xin, Siti Khairul Anuar, Nur Yuanna Insyirah, Shermaine Goh and Lim Jie Ying at the launch of the Singapore Floorball Overseas Training Programme on Aug 20. Fellow national floorballer Nicholas Chua was unable to attend the event. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

"(They gave a) letter of support to my school to reassure them that I'm going overseas for national training. And my school was very open to this opportunity for me, and allowed me to take an LOA, gave me a university that is near our training location so that I can study and train at the same time with minimum worry."

It will be a second overseas stint for Siti, who played for Czech top-

tier club SC Tempish Vitkovice in the 2019-20 season.

"Honestly I was a bit worried, but excited as well," she said. "I'm a bit older now... physically, can I still keep up?"

"But (I said yes because) this is still a rare opportunity, and it's Sweden, it's the best in the world."

Siti, who coaches floorball at a few primary and secondary schools, is grateful that all of them

are supportive of her trip, adding that she hopes to pick up new skills over there.

Chua, who has been with the national team for 10 years, shared Siti's sentiments, adding: "I want to develop myself there and then contribute what I have learnt and bring it back to the national set-up."

"Most of my schools are actually very supportive of this whole idea because by going there, I'll level up my coaching and I can bring back (experiences), and the schools can benefit from it as well," added the floorball coach via a phone call, as he was unable to attend the event.

Ow, who noted that there were other eligible athletes who could not go on this attachment due to commitments such as national service and family responsibilities, said this will not be a one-off arrangement.

SFA is looking to formalise a three-year memorandum of understanding with Pixbo by the end of the year, as it seeks to build a sustainable pathway with the outfit.

"We are targeting around 10 athletes per year from 2027 to 2029, and over time we hope to create more opportunities for players... who are ready to take the next

step," said Ow.

Joining the launch ceremony virtually, Pixbo vice-president Meghan Redjamand said: "We see great benefit in this (programme) from Pixbo's side – not only an opportunity for the players to become better and develop, but also for us to become greater as an organisation."

"Pixbo was created in 1981 and we've had 107 international players who have played for us, but what makes this so unique is that it's always been the players themselves (joining), and not supported by any federation."

"But in this case, we as Pixbo see a very strong will from the SFA to take this step, and we think this unity will be great for both of us."

Ow's hope is that such stints will lead to better performances ahead of two events that Singapore will be hosting – the men's Under-19 World Floorball Championships in 2028 and the SEA Games in 2029.

He said: "If these athletes return, can contribute at a higher level and help raise standards around them, that would be a very positive outcome for us."

"Ultimately, we are trying to build a stronger system, a deeper pool of athletes and a pathway that gives more Singapore players the opportunity to test themselves at a higher level."

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