

DRAFT

Address by
Sacha Thompson, Chief Operations Officer
Digicel (Trinidad and Tobago) Limited
At the launch of the Digicel Kick Start Academy
Aura, Cipriani Boulevard, Port of Spain
Tuesday, November 1 2011
4:00 p.m.

All Protocols Observed

... Good afternoon and welcome to the launch of the 2011 Digicel Kick Start Academy.

For years, Digicel has known the importance of the effect that sport can have on society. It encourages healthy lifestyles, it can foster a sense of unity among communities and it creates avenues for the development of our youth. These are some of the reasons that Digicel has become the region's biggest sponsor of football. We are committed to working throughout the region to develop the sport and –by extension – society.

Digicel's continued sponsorship of programs like the Digicel Caribbean Championships, the COPA de Naciones Digicel in Central America, the Tobago Football League and more than 15 Football Federations throughout the region is a testament to this initiative. We believe that sport can change lives.

Locally, we aim to create programmes that can aid in football development from the ground up. It begins with our football clinics, where aspiring young athletes can learn the fundamentals and gain vital exposure that will serve them well on their journey to sporting excellence.

We call it the Road to the Academy and it begins with the Digicel Kick Start Programme – a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for young athletes hoping to make a career playing football. Selected from 7 countries across the Caribbean, including Panama, these 37 talented individuals will have a unique chance to experience life as a professional footballer. Chosen for their skill and commitment to The Beautiful Game, they will spend one week deeply immersed in football. Drills, practice, matches – you name it, they will be doing it, and they will be learning from the best of the best. Liverpool and England football legend, John Barnes will be joined by Kevin Ball and Carlton Fairweather of the English Premier League Club Sunderland AFC to teach these young players the fundamentals they will need to excel.

Our goal here is to create an environment where the players will feel encouraged and inspired to pursue their dreams while learning about the commitment and discipline it takes to succeed. It is no secret that a wealth of talent is constantly emerging from the Latin American and Caribbean region. We would like to help provide these young athletes with the tools necessary to build careers around their sport of choice. We begin at the grassroots level, providing them with the fundamentals so that when they are ready to move on to the next level – be it the Digicel Pro League or the national level, or even the international level – they will have all of the tools that they need to succeed.

Digicel would like to thank John Barnes for partnering with us in our drive to help make these young footballers' dreams come true. We would also like to thank Kevin Ball and Carlton Fairweather for sharing the expertise that comes with being involved with one of the world's most watched football leagues. Last, but certainly not least, we would like to thank the participants of the Digicel Kick Start Academy. It is your drive and determination that has gotten you this far. To paraphrase an old saying: "The journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step." Think of this as your first step on an amazing journey.

Thank you.

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