

Children of Refugees in Melbourne become Football Federation Victoria Champions

TARNEIT, MELBOURNE - A Melbourne soccer club made up of predominantly African and Muslim young players overcomes racial tensions to win a Melbourne Championship.



Melbourne, Nov 8, 2018 (Issuewire.com) - Tarneit United is home to two junior championship soccer teams that competed in the Football Federation Victoria club competition this year in Melbourne's West.

The victories of the Under 12 and the Under 14 teams in the competition are creating a positive impact in a community tarnished by negative 'African Gang' media headlines.

Club Director Liban Yusuf said he first formed the club due to a growing need for children in the community to have a home where they felt they belonged while playing the sport they love.

"The majority of the parents and those involved in the club came over as refugees," he explains.

"I first started the club in 2014 after people in the community would come to me saying that their child

had been kicked out of other clubs and they asked if I could run a weekend activity for them. So Tarneit United was born."

That marked the beginning of the challenges to come.

Verbal racial abuse towards Tarneit United coaches, referees and their young players on the field by a local opposition club this year was a memory he would rather forget.

Other clubs not wanting to travel to Tarneit for games and a lack of sponsorship also posed problems. But a strong community effort keep the club strong.

The Under 12 team won all their games this season, winning the FFV championship for their age group.

The Under 14 team, beat the opposition team 3-0 in their championship final, however, an error in paperwork gave the championship to the opposition team by default.

"Our Under 14's won that final however our coach did not record one of our players in the book. As per the FFV rules, all players must be named.

"After we had won the game, the other team went straight to the book, spotted our error and the decision was overturned. Even though we had won on the field, we were not formally recognised champions by the Football Federation of Victoria. It was a silly error on our part."

Liban says the club still crowned their Under 14 team as champions at the clubs prize-giving event last night.

He is hoping the two 'championship' teams might better the club's chances of obtaining sponsorship next year. He remains optimistic despite the challenges.

"Overcoming adversities will make our players tough both on and off the field."

(Link to Championship Video Celebrations on Tarneit United Facebook Page Video U12 Championship team <https://www.facebook.com/Tarneitunitedsc/videos/315368159218586/>)

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