

'Qualifying for Asia Cup is commendable'

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EVERYONE IS aware of Baichang Stadium's fan following. And after every single day, the list seems to get bigger and bigger.

Not only has he won million of hearts on the field but also managed to do it off the field. A team-man to the core, the 31-year-old doesn't think twice when it comes to promoting any football event.

After a tiring day on Monday, where he scored a winner in Mohan Bagan's 1-0 win over Mahindra United, the 'Bikkimese Sniper' was up on his feet for a football promotional event in the city. The Mohan Bagan striker speaks exclusively to Mumbai Mirror to share his new future goals. Excerpts

What does this entire promotional event mean to you?

Tata Tea-Arsenal Soccer Stars talent hunt was nurturing young talent, I wanted to be a part of it. Me being the president of Football Players Association (FPA) we decided to be part of this initiative. It gives youngsters op-

portunity to visit Arsenal and get the real feel of professional football.

Mohan Bagan had a worst of starts to the I-League but to everyone's surprise they won their last five matches...

I think the players got their act together to put up a good show. The team played very well and it has settled down now, I think the credit should go to everyone including the coach Katin Boscharila for bringing Bagan up to the second position.

You must be a happy that Indian coach Bob Houghton finally got a contract extension? Will this boost your confidence of continuing till 2011?

I have not decided yet and would be taking it year by year. I would love to play till 2011 Asia Cup but I have to analyse the entire situation, circumstances and then take a decision accordingly.

Are you happy with how the Indian team has been performing lately?

I am satisfied with how things have went so far. Winning the AFC Challenge Cup and qualifying for the Asia Cup is a commendable thing. So overall I am very happy with how things have gone.

Who is your real successor?

There are many players like Steven Diaz, who has been superb with this team, (Sanil) Chhetri and NP Pradhan, also have been goal scorers in many matches. The team is young and has been doing very well. In there is no individual player in particular, we have bunch of talented players.

What are your future plans?

Currently, I have not decided anything. But I want to start my own football academy for sure.