

Maechan 04/10/2011

Chiangrai Hills Stadium is open!

It took them two years to build what is probably the most beautiful private football stadium in the north of Thailand but the hill tribe “boys” of the Chiangrai Hills Project can now feel what the future will be.

The story began two years ago when a bunch of hill tribe youngsters came to Insi Thai House (www.insithaihouse.com), the home of the Chao Phya Abhai Raja Siammanukulij Foundation, to speak with its chairman, Count Gerald van der Straten Ponthoz.

The original idea was to allow the talented hill tribe football players to compete at a professional level with their own team, a dream they wanted to become reality.

But there was the problem of the sustainability. A football team can only compete at a professional level, with proper long term financial support and sponsorships, which can be a real challenge for a hill tribe team.

Keeping this challenge in mind, Count Gerald redefined the priorities of the project, the first priority being the sustainability and the revenue creation for the team. The goal was to allow their hill tribe team not to rely too much on outside help or sponsors and, at the same time, create revenues for the players and their family.

This is how the story of Chiangrai Hills Stadium began.

The stadium would be built in Maechan, 20km north of Chiangrai. 40.000.000 Baht would be invested, the stadium would be the home of the team, it would be built to accommodate shops to create revenues, it would reflect the beauty of the Chiangrai nature and, at the same time, be a 21st century stadium with the biggest LED screen of the region.

But there was a condition that Count Gerald imposed to the boys: They had to help the construction and act as real responsible owners. Their stadium would not come free on a silver plate!

What then happened during the two following years was what happens in nature, where only the strongest survive.

Two years of hard work, joining the construction teams, mixing concrete, digging the earth, lifting material, building walls, was probably too much for those who saw only football as the final goal and not the value of owning a whole stadium.

Some dropped from the project but others kept fighting till the last day, with the aim of becoming not only footballers, but also business owners and stadium managers.

It is on the 1st October 2011 that the reward finally came, with the very first activity at the stadium; the Chatiphan Cup.

While it was only a soft opening, the happiness could be felt everywhere, among the building teams as well as the competing football teams and fans who joined the 9 days event.

With the Chiangrai Hills Stadium ready, the boys and their families are now ready for a new chapter in their lives.

The stadium has everything to impress everyone. It has two fields, it is nicely blended into the surrounding nature, offering an enjoyable atmosphere with trees all around, it has plenty of food and drink stations, a large stage with the largest LED screen of the region, covered grand stands, a maximum capacity of 5000 people, dormitories for visiting teams, VIP rooms and parking.

A close collaboration with Premier League team Chiangrai United will bring more activities in the near future, such as a football academy, and drive even more youngsters towards sports.

But besides the football activities, the stadium can also be used for other events, concerts, shows and performances, which will hopefully stimulate the local economy.

The life of Chiangrai Hills Stadium only begins...

The story of the construction can be seen on this video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ab6MhmDv1W4>

More can be seen on:

www.chiangraihills.com

Also find Chiangrai Hills on Facebook

www.facebook.com/chiangraihills.stadium

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