



Kerala Blasters FC x Manjappada

Minutes of Meeting

Date: 17/10/2025 | Time: 5:50 pm - 7:50 pm

Venue: Crowne Plaza, Kochi

Participants :

Kerala Blasters FC - CEO, Abhik Chatterjee

Manjappada - Nikhil Thomas, Sharfudheen P, Nandhu, Sijoy Pallan, Asamleedheen K, Vishnu J

[Additional attendees, Kerala Blasters FC, CMO, Antony Manu]

*The entire meeting was audio recorded, which will serve as concrete proof against any disputed points.

Agenda

1. Clarification on the "Obsessed with trophies" Statement.
2. Discussion on Training Facilities.
3. Recruitment and Domestic Signings.
4. Fan Protests and Management's Response.
5. Financial Transparency and Sustainability.
6. Plans for Trophies and Competitions.
7. Fan-Management Communication and Accountability.
8. Younger Players' Exposure in ISL.
9. Interim Coaches and Club Trajectory.
10. Coaches' Involvement in Recruitment Decisions.

Minutes

1. *Welcome and Intent to be transparent*

- Club Management expressed willingness to have an open and transparent discussion.
- This was echoed by the members of the Manjappada.

2. *Clarification on the “Obsession with Winning” Statement*

Q. Manjappada questioned the statement from the club CEO suggesting an avoidance of an “obsession with winning.”

- CEO Abhik Chatterjee clarified the context which was part of a long form interview was not taken in the right sense, and was picked from a statement made about his vision for the employees of the club emphasizing a step-by-step approach focused on professionalizing the club and the steps needed to climb up a ladder leading to the club winning trophies. It was about not looking at the prize alone and being obsessed with achieving something (without focusing on how to get there), but working on each individual rung of the ladder to ensure that everybody is working to optimize and enhance their standards and contributions to the Club. The Club remains committed to winning every tournament it participates in; the intent has never wavered. Hence, this statement in isolation has been taken out of context.
- Club Management also acknowledged fan sentiments and assured that the ambition to win every trophy remains the primary focus and will fuel the ambitions of every person associated with the club.
- Manjappada members acknowledged the intent behind the statement and also agreed to the context that the full statement implied.

Q. Discussion on Training Facilities. Manjappada expressed concerns regarding the availability of training ground at start of this season post the Durand Cup 2024.

- Management refuted the claims that availability of training pitch was an issue, refereeing to Manjappada’s tweet on 14th August, while the team was in the Durand Cup in Kolkata.

- The CEO clarified that Panampilly ground was always available to the senior team throughout when they reached Kochi and was never an issue for the senior team.
- Management explained the government tender and bidding process for retaining Panampilly Nagar ground happens every year with a cooling off period for a couple of months, while ensuring training ground was always available to the club, due to the club's good relationship with the concerned authorities.
- Management shared details about the 45% higher and winning bid placed and secured in November to secure the facility for another year.
- Management confirmed that details about alternate training facilities will be shared soon.
- Management asked Manjappada to always vet news received from sources outside the club with the Club itself as misrepresentation of facts can create panic which was agreed to by the members.

Q. Recruitment and Domestic Signings. Manjappada raised issues about the lack of impactful domestic signings and late recruitment decisions this season.

Management acknowledged past recruitment challenges and explained the following:

- Intent to balance short-term performance with long-term growth. Hence, signings in key positions have already been made for the 2025-26 season, with certain quality players available. With this the Club has showcased decisiveness in addressing some of the issues that are apparent.
- The Club mentioned that while signing players, more in-depth assessment parameters are being looked at, including the mental strength to play for India's biggest club. Investing in players for the sake of investment and bringing players who might not fit the bill and might be token signings is not ideal. The Club also acknowledged that mistakes are always part of the process while identifying talent and took responsibility for the current performances of the team, and assured the fans that decisive decisions are being taken to resolve the same.
- Ongoing efforts to recruit key players for the winter transfer window. There is an attempt to address the situation with at least one more signing if everything aligns. Difficult to get every identified target in the winter window as teams will never release their key players while they are fighting for a play-off spot. All players are also run by the current coaching staff and are onboarded with their inputs.

- Club stated that in the last window, the club had signed players like Aiban (on a transfer fee), Pritam, Prabir and Ishan who are top Indian talents and much sought after. The intent was displayed by while onboarding these high-value players.
- Management also stated that selling of certain players becomes necessary because whenever players have wanted to stay at this club, it has never been an issue to retain them if there has been an understanding. If the players themselves prefer a change in environment and better financial opportunities (which become difficult to match as after a point, certain numbers border on destroying the current wage structure and squad harmony), then the Club has to take decisions in its best interests.
- The Club management stated that investment in players like Korou Singh (signed on a transfer fee) who then played 25 games with the Reserve Team last year, is an example of its investment in developing future talent.
- Current squad trimming aimed at maintaining an ideal squad size of 22-23 players instead of the 30 players available, as it impacts quality of training. The Club acknowledged that ideally this should have been done in the summer, but the market did not offer ideal opportunities to do so. Club also wants to identify a united and motivated group who are committed to the club's goals at the current moment. The idea that the club needs to sign an equal number of players against the number of players released is not accurate as it would mean that the squad would be back to a bloated 30-member unit.

Q. Fan Protests and Management's Response. Fans expressed concerns about how protests were handled, citing examples of placards being removed and police deployed to suppress fan sentiment.

- Management clarified that placards were removed due to general guidelines associated with broadcast and League competition security as the opening game shot with unrest displayed in the East gallery would not have been ideal. This was NEVER done on club's directive.
- There was no intent to suppress fan voices, as evidenced by placards being returned immediately on the CEO's intervention as the security were instructed to stop the same during the game against Mohammedan SC on December 22, 2024, in Kaloor. As a result, the placards were displayed during the entirety of the game. Had the Club wished to suppress the same, it would have completely revoked all rights to carry anything into the stadium as Management was aware of where the Manjappada members had stored these placards.

- The Police's decision to suppress the protest inside and within the stadium's proximity is one, taken on their accord to maintain law and order without any involvement on the part of the club. Police had informed Manjappada members that they needed to take permission for such protests on paper which had not been applied for and had informed core Manjappada members that there would be preventive detention incase things went wrong. This was accepted by members present in the meeting. The club has given more clarity in a recently released statement.
- The CEO reiterated the club's support for peaceful protests within reasonable limits and also stated that the Manjappada were free to continue their protests if they felt that the meeting was unsatisfactory.
- The CEO praised the passion of the fans for the club and acknowledged the sacrifices made by them to attend games in person in challenging circumstances. He also stated that fans will always be free to share their opinions and the Club will always listen to constructive criticism. He also stated that the KBFC fans are like no other and assured them that they would soon have moments to feel proud of their team.

Q. Financial Transparency and Sustainability

- Management shared insights into the financial challenges faced by the club in terms of high operational costs, including mounting and incremental stadium rent (which is amongst the highest rents paid for football stadiums in India football).
- The CEO added that the Club was available for sale after the previous owners had exited and anybody from the state of Kerala was free to pick it up. The current owners showed their passion and commitment towards Kerala Blasters FC after securing ownership and have to date invested more than INR 350 Crores into the project. He also revealed that the club loses more than 1/3rd of its investment every year and stated that the perception that the owners "take money out of the club" is wrong as technically you cannot profit from a loss-making business. He also added that the total ticket collections in a season only account for covering 60% of the investment made into stadium rent and operational costs, and hence is another area where owners are not "putting money from ticket collections into their pockets" after every game as they are again, losing money. The owners remain committed to supporting the club through their personal funds and are as enthusiastic as ever to bring trophies and success, The CEO clarified that it was important for clubs to balance losses prudently so that clubs in India do not go under, as it makes it unappealing for Indian football and future investors. The CEO also requested for minimum respect to be shown towards the owners (and in fact all investors in Indian football) who are invested in Indian football for the right reasons, which is not to make money (evidenced by the losses) but to

fuel the passion for the sport in the state of Kerala. He also provided examples of how reckless financial planning has caused clubs in the past to go bankrupt and sometimes even change cities due to lesser financial burden/ additional government support.

- The CEO stated every penny from revenue generated through ventures like Kravin, was reinvested into the club. This still isn't enough to balance the books but is an innovative move but the Club to ensure that there are other non-conventional ways to support the club in line with global practices around the world. He added that the abuse and the hatred displayed sometimes towards Kravin had an impact on its employees who are trying to do their best.

Q. Plans for Trophies and Competitions. Manjappada stressed the need for trophies and competitive performances in tournaments like the Super Cup and ISL.

- The CEO confirmed the ambition to continue to push on this season for play-off spots. Stressed on the fact that the management in no way, has "given-up" on this season.
- Compete for all trophies, including the Super Cup and Asia-level competitions. Stated that the full strength first team will participate in the Super Cup (upcoming) and the Durand Cup (for the upcoming season).
- Leverage recent signings like Dusan Lagator to strengthen the squad, who is a player that the Sporting Director had shortlisted and was tracking for a year. Dusan would have been signed in the summer, but when the Club received an indication from his previous club that it was possible to do something in the winter window, it acted decisively and paid a transfer fee to secure the player now. This signing in no way is influenced by the protests and the Club remains adamant that such decisions should be measured and taken only when it is confident. Such decisions should not be taken under pressure.
- Confirmed that the Club will build a squad whose ambition would be to compete for the ISL Shield and ISL Cup next year.

Q. Fan-Management Communication and Accountability. Manjappada voiced concerns about repeated unfulfilled promises and lack of consistent communication.

- Management acknowledged that club remains committed to these promises despite any setback that might have been faced. It also clarified that more than a dozen email exchanges and meetings over the past years has shown how much it cares for its fan-base and that no

supporter group in Indian football has this level of access to the management. This was acknowledged and accepted by the members present.

The CEO also underlined club's commitment towards:

- Improved transparency in decision-making and announcements.
- Regular updates to fans on key developments, including recruitment and infrastructure plans through the club's Fan Advisory Board initiative which will play a key role in that. As communication at the current moment is scattered and all over the place, FAB is an attempt to streamline and give power to individual fans (even those who are not part of any supporter groups).

Q. Younger Players' Exposure in ISL. Manjappada raised concerns about younger players being prematurely "exposed" to high-pressure situations.

- Management clarified that younger players are given opportunities based on performance, not just age. The CEO stated that some of these players were fan-favorites last year and a dip in form cannot be used to state that they should be stripped of opportunities.
- Examples provided of successful youth development, such as players from the reserve team like Korou Singh stepping up.
- The Club acknowledged the challenges of balancing exposure with readiness and informed the members that recruitment has already been done for the summer to address weak areas.

Q. Interim Coaches and Club Trajectory and a discussion about the role of interim coaches in the current setup.

- Management expressed satisfaction with the interim coaching staff's contributions
- Highlighted improved team performances and morale.
- Confirmed that no immediate changes will be made to avoid disrupting the current positive momentum.

- A final decision on coaching for the next season will be made after reviewing the team's performance at the end of this season, until then the current coaching team will be supported to give their level best.

Q. Coaches' Involvement in Recruitment Decisions. Manjappada enquired whether coaches are consulted during the recruitment process and also asked about functioning of support staff.

Management confirmed that:

- Coaches are always consulted before finalizing signings.
- Recruitment is aligned with the club's playing philosophy, ensuring that signings complement the team's style and long-term goals.
- Interim coaches have been involved in decisions regarding the current window.
- The CEO confirmed that there will be a season-end review to review the performances of all teams and appropriate actions will be taken, basis the findings.

Resolutions and Key Takeaways

1. Training Grounds:

Management committed to providing updates about alternative training facilities soon.

2. Recruitment:

Three domestic signings have already been secured for the next summer transfer window. -
At least one additional signing is expected during the current January transfer window.

3. Fan Relations:

Management assured no vindictive actions against fans and encouraged constructive feedback and good rapport with passionate fans.

4.Trophy Aspirations:

Reaffirmed ambition to win the ISL, Super Cup, and compete in Asia-level tournaments.

5.Younger Players' Development:

Management to ensure a balanced approach toward developing and utilizing youth players in high-pressure situations.

6.Interim Coaches:

Interim coaches will remain in charge for the remainder of the season to maintain team stability.

7.Coaches' Role in Recruitment:

Coaches will continue to have a significant role in player recruitment decisions.

Closing Remarks:

Management reiterated its commitment to the club's growth and success.

- Manjappada were thanked for their passion and encouraged to maintain open communication and actively participate in the functioning of the Fan Advisory Board, for a clear, streamlined platform for communication.