

WE'RE FUTSAL CRAZY!



by **Scott McPherson**

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SWINDON students will be able to complete a two-year Futsal Scholarship Programme from September 2010 for the first time in the UK.

A partnership between @Futsal Ltd and Swindon Academy will give players the opportunity to learn and train at the state of the art arena in a pioneering virtual sixth form environment at Kembrey Park.

Futsal is the only form of indoor football officially recognised by worldwide governing body FIFA.

It is also supported by UEFA and the FA and has been made a cornerstone of development plans for the football associations in the UK.

Swindon Academy is providing the educational template for the groundbreaking virtual sixth form.

"We have a very innovative senior management team here," said programme director Simon Abercrombie.

"The Futsal Scholarship Programme has never happened before.

"Swindon Academy, as part of the United Learning Trust, is excited to be part of the project.

"It enables education and the professional sports industry to achieve such positive and far reaching outcomes for young people aspiring to careers in football, sports or leisure."

The Futsal Scholarship Programme will aim to produce elite players that could represent Great Britain in time for Futsal's proposed debut at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, pending the outcome of on-going discussions for its inclusion as a demonstration sport.

Scholarships are to be launched

Swindon, Cardiff and Birmingham will start delivery of this ground breaking programme from September next year, with a further 30 sites planned over the next few years.

The full-time first class course underpins playing performance with opportunities to focus on vocational or academic pathways.

This ensures that all scholars have exit routes into either university or employment within the sports and active leisure industry.

Gill Barrett, the associate principle of Swindon Academy, has been the driving force behind the programme.

She said: "This innovative partnership with @Futsal is inspiring our students, driving aspirations and inspiring their minds."

A Futsal spokesman said: "With all home nations currently languishing near the bottom of FIFA's official rankings, one of the programmes core aims is to develop the next generation of international players so that the home nations can rub shoulders with the world's elite.

"They could join world class players such as Ronaldo, Deco, Robinho and others who attribute their abilities to Futsal."

Futsal is the world's fastest growing sport, with 30 million players across the globe.

To find out more, visit www.futsaluk.net

