

## **World Cup and Olympic hopefuls amongst those recognised at glittering Aspire graduation ceremony**

Some of Qatar's most promising sportsmen and scholars graduated from Aspire Academy at a star-studded ceremony in Doha on Tuesday evening. During the glittering ceremony, which evoked emotions of rejoicing and reflection, more than six years of studying and training were celebrated by the majority of the 29 graduating teenagers.

Amongst the several hundreds of guests to applaud the boys as they were awarded their diplomas were senior figures from within the Qatari sporting establishment, Aspire Academy members of staff and the proud parents and family members of all graduates present.

Addressing the graduating students during the ceremony's opening speech, Mr Ivan Bravo, Director General of the Aspire Academy, said, "It is truly an honour and a joyful moment to be here tonight recognising the outstanding achievement that this graduation means for the young individuals that arrived at the Academy as 12-year-old boys and leave it today as bright, well prepared young men with a future full of possibilities. All of you have what it takes to become a champion in life, to lead by example for others and to act in a way that honours your parents and this country, which you will lead one day."

Those bidding farewell to the Academy this year included a mix of Qatar's very best academic achievers and most promising athletes. With sprinters, squash players, table tennis champions and track and field stars amongst the class of '14, many of the young graduates will now be hoping to compete for Qatar at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

One graduate, already established as a world-class athlete, is 17-year-old Ashraf Amgad Mohamed Elseify, who last year set a new world record at the World Junior Championships with a hammer throw of 85.6m. Having joined the Academy four years ago, Ashraf had mixed feelings about his departure from the Doha institution.

Ashraf said, "My time at Aspire Academy has taught me the importance of social ties, time management and teamwork. I know I have come a long way over the last few years and I will miss the Academy dearly. However, I am confident that I will be able to build on my experiences and achieve far greater things in the future."

Others to be recognised on Tuesday evening were a total of 21 young Academy footballers including talents who now play for youth teams of some of Europe's most decorated clubs in Spain, France, Belgium and Austria. One of those, hoping to represent Qatar at the 2022 FIFA World Cup, is 17-year-old Doha-born footballer Tamim Mohammed Issa Al Muhaza, who is currently a member of the youth team of Spanish champion Atlético Madrid.

Picking up his diploma at the ceremony, Tamim revealed his pride, "I am overjoyed to stand here and have my hard work recognised. The five years at Aspire Academy have been incredibly beneficial to me. In that time I have grown and improved as a person and as an athlete with the help of my coaches and teachers. The Academy has offered me a wealth of once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and for these I could not be more grateful."

Summing up the various achievements of the now-departing class of '14 in the ceremony's closing speech was Aspire Zone Federation Chief Executive Officer Mr Khaled Abdulla Al-Sulaiteen. "It is with great delight that I congratulate all the young men here tonight on their progression from the Academy. During their many years at this institution, I am confident they will have benefited from the world-class teaching and training facilities that we offer to all that are fortunate enough to study here. Their graduation is an immense achievement in itself and I look forward to watching the boys make the most of their opportunities in the years to come."

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