



Photo: Helge Schütz

SOCCKER BOOST ... (from left) Harald Fuelle, Guido Kandziora, Wieland Klinger, Robert Hopperdietzel and Collin Benjamin at the launch of the HopSol Youth Soccer League.

N\$1 million HopSol Youth Soccer League launched

• HELGE SCHÜTZ

THE HopSol Youth Soccer League was launched yesterday with a sponsorship of N\$1 million over three years by HopSol Solar Power, a private company in the solar industry.

The league will be run by BKK Auas Sports Trust, consisting of former Hamburg professional player and Brave Warriors captain Collin Benjamin, Wieland Klinger, a youth soccer head coach at DTS, and Guido Kandziora, a sports director at DTS.

At the launch yesterday, Benjamin said through the programme, he was determined to tackle social disparities in Namibia.

"The current state of soccer development,

especially at grassroots level, mirrors the societal disparities within our country. "Personally, I am passionate about addressing these social challenges, using soccer as a tool to drive change within our country. I believe it is imperative that for soccer to advance and talented athletes to be identified in preparation for high-level competition, proper and structured development programmes should be in place," Benjamin said.

He added that the league, which is due to start at the end of February, will cater for players from under-9 to under-19 level.

"The creation of the Hopsol Youth Soccer League by BKK Auas Sports Trust is an initiative to provide a platform for soccer development for under-9

"We would like to use sport as a vehicle to remove at least 1 000 children off the streets, and create future soccer icons who can place Namibia on the global map," he said.

League administrator Wieland Klinger said the league will start on 24 February, and run through to 28 October.

There will be 10 teams per age group category, with a total of 60 teams participating across the six age group categories.

They aim to involve about 650 players from Windhoek in the first year of the league, while the long-term aim is to also develop the league in other regions of Namibia.

Klinger said eight teams had already confirmed their participation, consisting of

to under-19 age groups. We want to broaden the current scope of organised youth soccer and revive the schools' soccer culture, like in the old days when school rivalries were healthy and fiercely-contested events," he added.

Benjamin said with the current financial problems being experienced in Namibia and government's other pressing concerns, "sport had effectively been privatised to take the load off government", and he quoted John F Kennedy's famous statement—"Ask not what the government can do for you, but what you can do for your government".

The chairman of HopSol, Robert Hopperdietzel, said he was very excited about the venture, which would in the long run create talented players who could compete amongst the best in the world.

schools, as well as club and academy teams.

He added that several clubs, such as Ramblers, DTS and SKW, and schools such as St Paul's, St George's, Academia and Van Rhyn, had offered their fields as match venues.

Kandziora will be involved in coaching the children as well as the teachers and coaches of participating teams.

He is currently the sports director at DTS, and has an impressive CV, including a European A coaching licence from Germany, gaining promotion five times for his team in Germany, and being the head coach of the German team which won the Military National World Cup.

Benjamin said they hoped to work with the Namibian Football Association, as custodians of football in Namibia, in the future.

"Sports administration has to be taken into private hands, and the main goal is to sit with the custodians of football in Namibia and map a way forward. But it's always better to do something than just talking about it, so yes, we want to be part and parcel of the NFA one day."