

Thursday, 6th December, 2007

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## Athletic launch sports academy

by Sportsdesk

### THE Pars have launched a new Dunfermline Academy of Sport after buying up Powerleague at Pitreavie Playing Fields.

Athletic have teamed up with the local business community to operate the new academy through a charity called the Pars Trust.

The club has acquired the five-a-side business and leasehold interest in the Pitreavie Playing Fields from Powerleague plc with the operation of the business handed over to the Pars Trust from last Saturday.

The commercial operation of the all-weather pitches and the hire of the grass pitches to the public and local organisations will continue as normal.

But the Pars Trust has been charged with establishing a development programme which will gradually upgrade the facilities to a standard which will match the best in Scotland.

Pars chairman John Yorkston said, "These are exciting times and I'm just delighted that we have managed to secure Pitreavie, not just for the first team, but for all the initiatives are involved in down there."

The group will re-invest profits made and source additional funding to enhance facilities at the site. Press Sport understands an indoor training centre could be added to the base in time.

The Trust will be chaired by local businessman Keith Punler and trustees will include Margaret Ross and Gordon Milne from the Pars Supporters Trust, Alastair Hibbert, project manager at the Pars and Athletic's marketing director, Tracey Martin.

The existing Pars community programme will transfer to the Trust and will now be developed there.

Coaching will be provided in a newly enhanced partnership with the SFA and Fife Council.

Speaking on behalf of the Pars Trust Keith Punler said he was "enthused and excited by the vision and objectives of the club". He added, "I know I speak for all trustees in saying we will be doing our utmost to progress this exciting community opportunity."

Bill Hodgins, Pars chief executive, said, "I was delighted that the club, as part of the acquisition, had secured first team training facilities for the next 50 years and that this would be a major platform for the future success of the club."

Boss Jim Leishman added, "Even as they stand our training facilities are excellent and I am looking forward to seeing the development progress over the year. The fact that the plans cover all ages, boys, girls and other local clubs will see a real community project emerge and hopefully also some quality players for our first team squad."

Sean Tracey, chief executive of Powerleague, said, "The site did not fit into Powerleague's wider strategic aims and long term plans, but we will work closely with the club to ensure a smooth handover and the continued success of the site going forward."

**Were the Pars right to sack Stephen Kenny?**

Yes  
 No

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