



**ANTON DEL ROSARIO is the Philam Life 7's Football League founder and plays for the Delimondo Laro FC.**

## FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME

NICO BOLZICO'S earliest memory of playing football was when he was two or three years old. "I remember kicking the ball with my dad every afternoon after he'd come back from the farm," he recalled. The Argentinian and better half of Solenn Heusaff is an avid fan and frequently plays with his friends every chance he gets. "Football was the first sport I enjoyed because I grew up playing it everyday in Argentina," he said.

Along with other football enthusiasts Chris Greatwich, Jason Dejong, Roxy Dorla and Mike Reyes, Nico is part of the Philam Life 7's Football League, a tournament started last year by former Azkals and Philippine national football team member Anton del Rosario who has dedicated most of his life to developing the country's passion for football whether on or off the field.

Compared to the usual football game, 7's is played at less than half the pitch using smaller goals, with seven players each instead of the full 11 per team in a regular football match, making it a faster-paced and more exciting game.

This 2019, the league is partnering with Philam Life, which shares Anton's advocacy of encouraging Filipinos to strive to live a more active lifestyle. "I have always believed in partnerships, especially when it comes to building programs for the youth. The fact that we have Philam Life and AIA on board, a company with international influence when it comes to football, shows we are going in the right direction. They are not only supporting the dreams of the youth, but also fulfilling dreams of players who never got the opportunity to play at the highest level. I hope this is the beginning of something that will last a long time," said Anton.

"Philam Life has been looking for a way to get into football, as AIA, our Hong Kong-based parent company, has been the Tottenham Hotspur Football Club's Global Principal Partner since 2017," said Bernadette Chincuanco, Philam Life's head of Branding and Communications. The UK-based Spurs, as they are more commonly known, competes in the Premier League. "We're happy to partner with the 7's, and support such an exciting football league that allows us to encourage Filipinos to live healthier, longer and better lives," she added.

Football is an intense sport which requires you to stay focused and alert at all times. "You need to be fit in order to play. It's not about running 20 kms or 30 kms—it's about doing your first three steps very fast because that's when you take advantage of having the ball," Nico said. Aside from having strong legs, you'll need brain power too. "You need to understand positioning. The challenge is how to react based on your skills."

In order to stay fit for the game, Nico works out five to six times a week. He also runs, sprints, does push-ups, signs up for races like Spartan, and tries to eat healthy. "Football motivates me to be fit. Health should always be a priority. If I want to perform well on the field, I have to be active and not lazy." He admits he may not be the most skilled player on the field, but whatever he lacks in skill, he makes up with his naturally competitive nature, boundless energy, and keen understanding of the game to push his team to win.

The most important part of playing football is loving the game. "You really bond with your friends, you learn to support each other, which eventually applies even off the field," he said. "You give it all for your team, you try to defeat your opponent, but after the game, you shake their hand and hug them. There's a lot of honor and respect in the sport, a very good way to learn life's lessons."

Catch Anton and Nico go head-to-head at the Philam Life 7's Football League with games held at McKinley Hill Stadium, Taguig. Admission is free. The gates are open from 6 to 9 pm.