

## Banpu Offers Learning Opportunities through Rural Pingpong Camp, Enriching the Heart of Giving from Seniors to Juniors



120 young table tennis players aged 6-16 years from Ubon Ratchathani, Chaiyaphum, Roi-Et, Yasothon, Si Saket and Khon Kaen joined the 7<sup>th</sup> “Banpu Table Tennis Camp, Inspiration for Students in Remote Areas,” at Ban Pracha Table Tennis Training Center, Ubon Ratchathani hosted by Banpu Table Tennis Club.

Sports are one of the recreational activities for kids in leisure time. However, for many kids, sports can be serious endeavors and life goals that demand full dedication. There have been many athletes who turned from amateurs to pros, living on income from being athletes. Currently, professional athlete is the third most aspiring career for young students after teacher and doctor<sup>1</sup>. However, having a career in professional sports is not easy. The path to a professional player requires readiness and impressive athletic skills. Furthermore, it takes participation in the sports arena to build up their excellence, and this requires financial support, either from family or sponsor. Therefore, turning pro is exclusively limited to some junior players with greater "opportunities" than others.

Offering "opportunities" is, therefore, very important for aspiring athletes, given socio-economic disparity, which inflicts a lot of young people. Without "opportunity" and "support", becoming a professional athlete is a far-fetched dream for them.

**Banpu Public Company Limited**, the founder and supporter of "Banpu Table Tennis Club" (BTTC), who has been creating potential Thai table tennis players for 11 consecutive years, sees the necessity to fill the gap of "learning opportunities" for young people, especially those in remote areas, by organizing “Banpu Table Tennis Camp, Inspiration for Students in Remote Areas”. Banpu provided young people with high-quality table tennis training by BTTC’s coach and athlete volunteers who are

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<sup>1</sup> From result of 9<sup>th</sup> Thai children’s dream career survey for 2018 of Adecco Thailand which conducted among Thai children aged 7 to 14 years old with total of 2,044 persons

national team and have experience in national and international tournaments. 120 young table tennis players aged 6-16 years from Ubon Ratchathani, Chaiyaphum, Roi-Et, Yasothon, Si Saket and Khon Kaen joined the camp at Ban Pracha Table Tennis Training Center. This camp not only provided learning opportunities for young athletes in remote areas, but also allowed BTTC's members a chance to cultivate the public mind by learning to give. They reversed their role from being those who **“received opportunities”** from Banpu to **“senior players”** who **“give back”** to underprivileged junior players. This makes BTTC a unique club, aiming to create ethical and competent people for the Thai society.

This camp spanned for four days. Every junior participant had equal opportunity to pursue their aptitude. First, they were placed in groups according to their level of competence, namely, basic, intermediate and advanced groups. Senior volunteers helped junior participants improve their skills all from the beginning: rules and regulations, racket holding, ball serving, ball taking as well as necessary sports science such as warming up, muscle and motor-control strengthening, and cooling-down. From there, participants were assigned to their particular leveled groups where they would be trained by coaches and BTTC's members who are players of the national junior team, who would share various techniques such as how to hit the ball back and forth, how to smash and spin, and how to control emotions and tenseness during competition. During the four days, we had seen the progress of all junior participants, who were ready, and with tenacity, to improve their skills to the next level.

**Mrs. Udomlux Olarn, Head of Corporate Affairs, Banpu Public Company Limited, and the manager of Banpu Table Tennis Club** said, "Banpu believes in our philosophy: 'Learning is the power of change and development'." Throughout 11 years since the establishment of BTTC, Banpu has dedicated to promote learning and skill development in table tennis for young Thais with a wide range of activities. We have hosted 'Banpu Table Tennis Club Camp: Inspiration for Students in Remote Areas' for seven consecutive years. We aim not only to provide better access to table tennis for young athletes in remote provinces, but we also want BTTC's players to reverse their role from those who receive opportunity to those who give back to the society through their favorite sport.

The role of athlete volunteers differs from the one they assume in training and competition. The Club's volunteers have further aims than to transmit their table tennis skills to junior players, but they are expected to "facilitate" junior camp participants in the learning, with safety, discipline and harmony. On the other hand, junior trainees learned both from senior volunteers and from peers with whom they



spent time in the camp. Altogether, the camp stands for the concrete learning process that will elevate the quality of Thai youths.

Cultivation of the public mind is the Club's key concern as reflected upon by a former BTTC's member, **Mr. Nopparat Boontim**, a pioneer BTTC's player who dedicated part of his time to develop local kids with table tennis and was a key volunteer helping with organizing this camp under the sponsorship of Banpu. Mr. Nopparat revealed, "I tried to use my knowledge of table tennis, the sport I'm good at, and my experience being a BTTC's player myself to build the capacity for the kids in my local area. I'm really glad that Banpu came in to fill the opportunity gap for the kids in remote areas, to help move them a step closer to proper, high-standard table tennis as well as to inspire them with clear athletic goals."

"At the end of the day, Banpu believes that every camp participant will be able to extend athletic skills appropriately to their level of competence and personal goals. It is our aim that this activity is equally open to both rookies and players of provincial teams. Most importantly, BTTC's athlete volunteers and coaches were happy, with their giving hearts, to be able to lend their expertise and experience to junior players in the camp," **Ms. Udomlux Olarn concluded.**

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#### **About Banpu Table Tennis Club (BTTC)**

Banpu Table tennis club (BTTC) was established early in 2008. It serves the dual purpose of promoting young Thai talent in table tennis, as well as creating the CSR linkage between Banpu's headquarters in Bangkok and its Chinese subsidiary – 'Banpu Investment (China) Ltd.' (BIC), which has been supporting table tennis in China. Through the collaboration, it is expected to tap into the expertise of China as the world leader of table tennis and transfer it to young Thai athletes.

**For further information**, please contact: BANPU Corporate Communications

Duangkamol Saleerat                      02 – 694 – 6852      Duangkamol\_s@banpu.co.th

Patyodsaporn Weeradittakit              02 – 694 – 6844      Patyodsaporn\_w@banpu.co.th