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**Big Hearted Care Home pledges support for Fife**

**Amputee Football tournament**

**A family-run Nursing Home near Dunfermline has stepped in to support the inaugural European Amputee Football Nations League competition next month, after discovering one of its employees was part of the Scotland National set-up.**

Bandrum Nursing Home, an award-winning business that offers nursing and palliative care, has pledged significant financial backing to Scotland’s National Amputee Football team, which will host Group D of the prestigious competition at Dalgety Bay in Fife. The decision to support the team came after Bandrum Managing Director, Rachel Payne, learned that one of her own staff team, Care Assistant Craig Lavender, was part of the Scotland set-up.

The Scotland National Amputee squad will face the Netherlands, Albania, Azerbaijan, and Kosovo in Group D of the competition at Dalgety Bay Sport & Leisure Centre in what will be the biggest international para-football tournament of its kind to take place in Scotland.  The Scotland squad, made up of 11 individuals each with a lower or upper limb amputation, will face their international counterparts on 28-29 October. The tournament will see 10 matches played across two days in an exhilarating tournament.

Hosting such an event comes at a considerable cost and the charity has been tirelessly campaigning in previous months for funds. So, when Care Assistant Craig mentioned the tournament to his employers, the big-hearted team at Bandrum jumped at the opportunity to support the cause of their popular employee by offering financial support.

Supporting charitable causes is not new to the family-owned care home. Bandrum is a long-standing supporter of the Scottish Huntington’s Association, with MD Rachel having run the London marathon in addition to organising three fundraising events in aid of the cause. There is also a social enterprise at Bandrum called Friends of Bandrum that serves to create community connections for residents while raising money for extracurricular activities for residents that go far beyond the standard care package.

Craig isn’t the only Fifer to play amputee football. Iain Matthew, of Glenrothes, is both a player and Director of Amputee Football Association Scotland and has an impressive sporting record. He represented Great Britain in swimming during the 90's, winning gold and silver medals in the World and European championships and competed in his second Paralympic Games in Atlanta where he won a silver medal. Both Iain and Craig are excited that Scotland has reached its first major tournament in amputee football.

Amputee football in Scotland is run by Scotland Amputee Football Association (AFAS) and the charity is calling on the locals in Fife to come along and support their national team and cheer on the lads at Dalgety Bay in October.

Eighteen teams will play in the inaugural Amputee Football Nations League, with teams split into four divisions. Each division will enjoy a tournament in a different location on a different date. Scotland is a host nation, along with Poland, France, and Belgium.  It is anticipated that hosting the tournament will cost AFAS around £40,000 so the organisation is appealing for sponsorship and financial backing. All matches will be live streamed.

Rachel Payne has been Managing Director of Bandrum for five years, before which she was a Director for 13 years. The residential care home was set up by her mother and her Uncle in 1986 and continues to be a close family-run operation.

On supporting Craig and the team, **Managing Director Rachel Payne, commented**: “I am delighted we have had the opportunity to support the Amputee Football Association and all the players in the Scotland team. It has been brilliant following the team and I’d like to congratulate every player for their top efforts. Well done.”

**Craig Lavendar, Fife-resident, amputee player and Care Assistant at Bandrum Nursing Home, commented:** “I’m really excited to see the Scotland team play on the international stage and it means even more that it will take place here in Fife.

“I’m really fortunate to work for a family business that not only cares for its residents but cares for its staff. We’re one big family and when my employers heard that I was involved with the Scotland amputee squad, they wanted to do whatever they could to support me and the cause. I’m so grateful for their support.”

**Iain Matthew, Fife-resident, amputee player and Director of Amputee Football Association Scotland, commented:** “From running a pilot project with a handful of players in 2017 to fronting a Scotland squad for an international tournament signals the growth and appetite for this sport in Scotland.  When the players are on the pitch, disabilities are secondary.  It’s simply about individuals coming together to play competitive football at a high level. Representing your country is something many can only dream about, and the honour is not lost on this team.

“I owe a lot to the people of Fife for supporting me during my paralympic career and there’s nowhere I’d rather see host this tournament. The scenery will showcase Scotland at its finest for our overseas visitors and I hope that local people will come and cheer on Scotland.”

**Ashley Reid, CEO of Scottish Para-Football** and founder of Amputee Football Association Scotland, commented: “It is a huge honour for Scotland to be hosting such a prestigious tournament and testament to the work of the players and volunteers.

“To be hosting the tournament in Fife, where Craig and Iain live, is really special for them both. AFAS is a modest charity run by a handful of volunteers so we’re extremely grateful to the team at Bardrum Care Home for stepping in to support us.”

**The tournament will take place from 28-29 October 2023 at Dalgety Bay Sports and Leisure Centre, Fife.**

**AFAS is offering pitch-side sponsorship to local businesses and traders.  Please contact** **Iainmatthew@hotmail.com** **for information.**

**ENDS**

For further information:

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**Notes to editors:**

Amputee Football Association Scotland was set up in 2017 to create opportunities for those with limb loss to participate in the beautiful game. The organisation is now a Game Leader of Scottish Para-Football, the Scottish FA’s governing body for all forms of para-football in Scotland. The Nations League is organised by the European Amputee Football Federation of which AFAS is a member.

Amputee football is unexpectedly fast paced, dynamic and physically gruelling on the upper body. It is well established across the world, with leagues operating in more than 30 countries worldwide and Scotland currently plays as part of the Irish Amputee Football league.

For interviews with Rachel Payne / Craig Lavender, please contact Ashley Reid, above

**Group A: Hosted in Poland – 16-18 June 2023 – England finished top of the league.**

Poland | Turkey | Spain |England

**Group B: Hosted in France – 8-10 September 2023**

France| Germany | Italy | Ireland

**Group C: Hosted in Belgium – 6-8 October 2023**

Belgium | Greece | Ukraine | Georgia | Israel

**Group D: Hosted in Scotland – 28-29 October 2023**

Scotland | The Netherlands | Albania | Azerbaijan | Hungary | Kosovo

**Amputee Football**

·       Amputee Football has existed in Europe and further afield since 1987, with many countries hosting national leagues.

·       England has an amputee football league, and amputee football teams are attached to many of the major Premiership clubs including Arsenal, Brighton, Everton, Manchester City, Peterborough and Portsmouth.

·       Turkey hosts a professional amputee football league with more than 600 players, where games are televised to the nation and players contracted for fees.

**Amputee Football Association Scotland**

@scotamputeeFA

[www.amputeefootballscotland.co.uk](http://www.amputeefootballscotland.co.uk)