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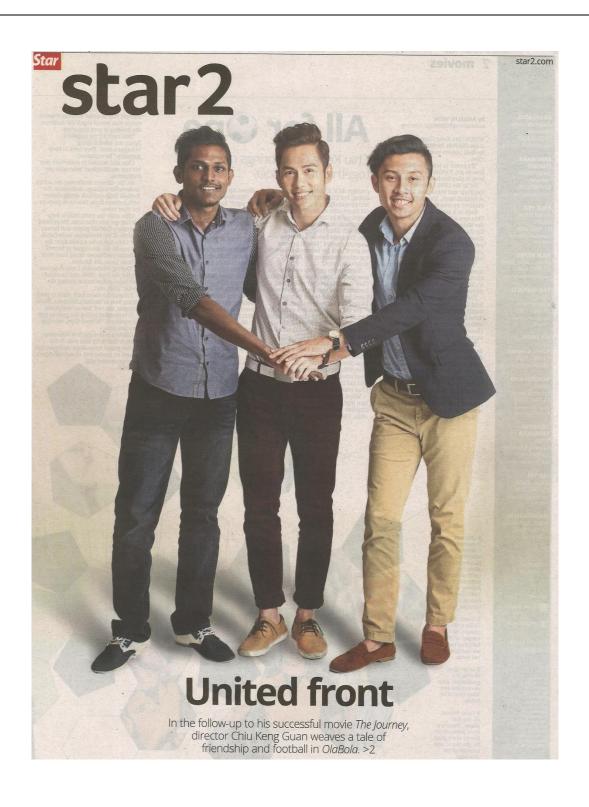
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By ANGELIN YEOH

WHEN Chiu Keng Guan set out to make OlaBola, he wanted to cast football players to star in the leading

make OlaBola, he wanted to east football players to star in the leading roles.

"It's easier to teach football players how to act. It's harder to teach actors how to play football," Chiu said.

Set in the 1980, OlaBola looks into the trials and tribulation of the national football team. It's a fictional film inspired by true events.

Back as a secondary school student, Chiu saw a documentary about how the Malaysian football team qualified However, put the start of the

Chow Kox Reolig area ratuse the reac-captain.

Hundreds turned up for the audi-tion and eventually engineering stu-dent Saran Kumar was cast as Muthu while Kajang-based quantity surveyor got the part for Ali. Rounding up the main cast is model-actor JC Chee as Tawkp.

Tauke.
During an interview at Menara Star in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, the trio recalled how their audition process

went. "I got a scene where I have to cry. I

1 Chiu was inspired to make OlaBola after watching a documentary about the national football team and their journey to the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow, Russia.

2 Chee's characte Tauke is the team captain. He has a temper on the field that has earned him a few red cards.

3 Saran plays Muthu, the goalkeeper, who works hard and takes care of his family.

41 play Ahmad Ali, the star player. There is a lot of pressure on him to score goals for the team, says Luqman of his character.

— Photos: Astro Shaw

All for One

Chiu Keng Guan brings raw talent together for OlaBola.

couldn't do it. I knew nothing about acting. But Chiu told me to keep going and eventually. I got it." said 22-year-old Saran who auditioned after he was encouraged by his mother. Lugman came prepared with Shahrukh Khan-inspired acting tips. The night before, a nervous Lugman googled 'how to become an actor' and got lessons from watching videos featuring the famed Bollywood actor.

"I decided to copy his eyebrow movements. Then during the audition, Chiu asked if I was not feeling well because I kept moving my eyebrows. Later, he advised to just be myself." 24-year-old Lugman recalled.

For Chee, Olabola was a chance for him to work with his ided Chiu. Unlike Lugman and Saran who actively play footbal. (Thee said he hasn't kicked a ball in years.

learned that in order to make a sports movie that would touch the audience, the buildup is very important.

"You can't let the audience figure out what is going to happen next. They have to keep guessing," he explained.

Chiu also wanted to make sure that his cast could deliver believable performances.



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"We have sound of the crowd cheering and singing: I want the audience to feel like they are in the stadium cheering on the national football team," Chiu said.

Perfect pitch

Perfect pitch

Chiu did not make OlaBola with the intention to change the local football scene. It's not about whether our football scene is good or bad. This movie is for all Malaysians. To me, it's the support that's lacking, Maybe we need to do something about that first."

Lugman hopes that with the film, the audience will come to realise the importance of brotherhood.

"I really believe this film will inspire our country," he said.
Overall, Chui is proud of the performance of his multi-racial cast.
"Lugman, I'c and Saran did well. We showed a rough cut of the movie to some filmmakers in Taiwan and they said to me, "Your new actors have done good!" Even the trainers were impressed with them," he said, clearly bearning with pride.

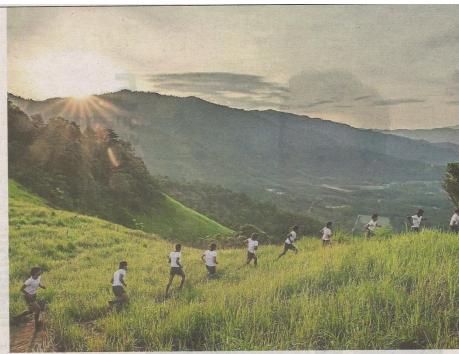
After OlaBola, Chee is determined to continue to pursue acting while Lugman and Saran are unsure.

"I have to focus on my studies first," said Saran who is pursuing a degree at Universiti Tenaga Nasional in Bangi, Selangor.

As for Chiu, he hopes to take a break... for a bit. "Then maybe start work on a comedy film," he teased.

You can never keep a good man down.

OlaBola opens at cinemas nation-wide today. For GSC showtimes, turn to P17.



The team behind OlaBola travelled extensively across Malaysia to achieve scenic shots like this. — Astro Shaw

