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## ELECTRIC SPORTS

### Red vision in bleak times

By Geoffrey Lip

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HE MAY have been several kilometres from Old Trafford, but red was the colour he saw, with the singing of club songs ringing in his ears.

That visit to Manchester United's home ground for their Champions League semi-final tie against Barcelona left a lasting impression on Manchester United Food and Beverage (MUFB) Pte Ltd chief executive officer (CEO) Andy Yun.

It also encapsulates his vision for the Manchester United Cafe Bar in Boat Quay, which had its soft launch on Thursday night.

'I want to create an environment like that of being in a stadium, to have that kind of effect,' Yun said excitedly.

'When I went to Old Trafford, even from such a great distance away, I could see Man United fans flocking to the stadium, packing it.

'But more importantly was the singing, that was present from beginning to end. It was red all over, and the singing could be heard from afar.'

It is a memory that fills the MUFB's CEO with a sense of excitement he can barely contain, and that passion to try and recreate that atmosphere is evident throughout The New Paper's interview with him.

#### Large following

Having been in operation in Indonesia for about three years, the Manchester United Cafe Bar there has since gained a large following.

Earlier this year, that vision of a stadium atmosphere was actualised in their branch in Jakarta.

'During the Champions League final, we did a screening and we managed to pack in over 900 people,' the 40-year-old CEO exclaimed.

'It was so crowded that the police were informed about the situation as a precaution, but even though we had Chelsea fans in the crowd, everything went well.'

With exclusive food and beverage rights in the Asia-Pacific region, which also gives MUFB the right to sell authorised Man United merchandise at their cafe bars, the Singaporean company is looking to expand the franchise, in Singapore and abroad.

A branch in Bangkok has opened, and another is scheduled to open in Japan next month.



RED HOME: MUFB CEO Andy Yun hopes the new Man United Cafe Bar will provide a suitable home for the United faithful to unite during match days. --TNP PICTURES: CHOO CHWEE HWA

It does seem strange though that MUFB have chosen to expand their franchise so aggressively in what is considered a period of recession.

'In times like these, when the situation appears bleak, it is still possible to shine,' Yun said.

'This is our first outlet here, but we do not intend to stop. I feel there is an opportunity now to expand.

'And that we also provide authorised products brought by the club, and offer a larger variety of such products with that personalised touch means there is potential for such expansion.'

Yun does openly admit that the cafe must cater to the masses.

### **Memorable**

Located next to the Central Business District (CBD), they have employed a 'garden' concept to provide a 'chilled out' atmosphere by the Singapore River for executives looking to relax after work.

And on weekends the cafe also aims to host family activities like cooking classes and football related games for children.

'We must meet the needs of our customers. We want it to be a memorable and fun experience for them,' Yun said,

'Doing business is like cooking a dish. While you may have all the ingredients and the recipes, you need to have the right skill to pull the dish off.

'In that sense I feel we have the right ingredients, from the concept, the food and to the service.'

And the food is certainly something to behold.

It is whipped up by master chef Dennis Liam, who worked in some of Singapore's top hotels before moving to the kitchens of the Middle East for five years. One can even imagine the burly local chef serving up gastronomic treats for the sheikhs owning Man United's neighbours Manchester City.

However Yun, a United fan himself, knows that a cafe such as this is ultimately for Singapore's Man United fans.

'Manchester United fans in Singapore need a home, and my hope is to bring United fans out of the comfort of their homes. to have them together as a group cheering their team,' Yun said.

'I want to unite the united.'

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