

Korean American Michelle Kang leads French professional football team of Lyon

Leading Ligue 1 club's relegation appeal; drawing attention as innovator in women's sports.



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Michelle Kang, a Korean American businesswoman and owner of several professional football teams, has been named the new president of Olympique Lyonnais, a French professional football team.

The Associated Press recently reported, "Kang has been appointed president of the Lyon team, which has won the French professional soccer league Ligue 1 for seven consecutive seasons."

Kang, a former vice president and general manager of Northrop Grumman Infotech, a global defense contractor, founded Cognosante, a public sector health care consulting firm in Falls Church, Virginia, in 2008.

She is the daughter of former lawmaker Lee Yoon-ja, who contributed to the advancement of women's rights as a member of the 11th and 13th National Assembly. While attending Sogang University, she went abroad in 1981 to study and became a successful businesswoman.

After winning Ligue 1 for seven consecutive seasons, beginning in the 2001-2002 season, Lyon was relegated to Ligue 2 (the second division) the following season due to financial regulation violations.

After the resignation of Chairman John Textor, newly appointed Chairman Kang spearheaded the appeal against the relegation.

Kang acquired Olympique Lyon Feminine (France), the prestigious eight-time UEFA Women's Champions League (UWCL) champions, in February of last year. She previously served on Lyon's board of directors since 2023.

Kang, who is particularly focused on women's football, began with the acquisition of Washington Spirit of the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) in February 2022 and since 2023 has been leading London City Lionesses of the England Women's Championship (2nd Division) and Olympique Lyon Feminine.

In July of last year, she also established Kynisca Sports International, the world's first multi-club global organization focused on professionalizing women's football.

In November of last year, she announced a record-breaking donation of US\$30 million over five years to the U.S. Soccer Federation's Women's and Youth Programs, stating, "We are committed to elevating the level of women's soccer on and off the field by providing female players with the support they need to reach their full potential and the professional support they deserve."

Forbes, an American business magazine, estimated Kang's wealth at US\$1.2 billion. 

