

FUTURE HOCKEY STARS IN MAKING

Dubai Youth Hockey Club's junior programme attracts over 100 kids

By **Jai Prasad V. Rai**
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DUBAI The progress of hockey in the UAE has seen steady growth over the years, but it's heartening to see the youth development programme run by Dubai Youth Hockey Club (DYHC) has evoked tremendous response.

The first youth hockey development coaching programme in the UAE, which has been designed to develop the skills and sportsmanship of young hockey players, has seen a surge of interest among youngsters in learning and playing the sport at the grassroots level.

"This year we have seen our youth coaching programme attract over 100 participants from across the UAE," DYHC founder and coach Nadia Schwarz told XPRESS.

"All our coaches are experienced hockey players and together we aim to develop new and aspiring talent into well-rounded athletes," she added.

Founded in 2012 with her husband Paul Schwarz, DYHC develops sporting talent of children ages 4 to 16 and follows the Hockey Australia FIH youth coaching programme - hookin-2Hockey - designed to teach the skills and rules of hockey using a game-centred approach.

Early stages

"Like any youth sports development programme, this is also the future of hockey. Hence it's vital to have such a programme if we want hockey to grow and be played in the region for many more years to come," she said.

With a comprehensive plan on board, DYHC is now contemplating on hosting tournaments that can give the youngsters match exposure. "We are currently in the early stages of putting together a youth hockey tournament to be played early next year.



SUPPLIED PHOTOS

Early start. Young kids undergo a session during the youth development programme held by DYHC

"Some of the under-16 girls have had some exposure playing touring teams that have come here recently, and we hope to play more early next year. As for touring overseas this is also in the pipeline," Nadia said.

But the lack of hockey grounds in the UAE has always been a big concern, but Nadia remained optimistic and said: "For many players we find it a little disheartening



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NADIA SCHWARZ,
FOUNDER, DYHC



knowing there used to be a proper outdoor hockey pitch but it got pulled up. However, indoor hockey is still very much an option and there are some amazing hockey enthusiasts who are trying to find a way to have at least one proper outdoor hockey pitch built."

Furthermore, with sponsors coming in for the youth programme, it did show signs of good days ahead. Avery Office Supplies and HSS health and safety training consultancy came on board for the 2014-15 youth programme season. "Working at grassroots level the backing of two sponsors is extremely welcomed, as is the support of our venue Horizon International School. We are now able to provide extra equipment, sports kits and branding at our coaching sessions to really develop the sport," said Nadia.

» For details about the academy contact Nadia Schwarz at dubai.youthhockey@gmail.com or **050 944 6172**.

SPORTS ROUND UP

TENNIS

The Great Big IPTL Contest

The Coca-Cola International Premier Tennis League (IPTL) announced the launch of 'The Great Big IPTL Contest' for fans across the world that will give them a chance to sit with their favourite stars in the dugout. For details on the Twitter-based contest log on to www.iptlworld.com/contest.

F1 IN SCHOOLS

World Finals at Ferrari World

F1 in Schools World Finals 2014, the world's biggest school competition, will take place at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi from November 16 to 18, just days ahead of the 2014 Formula 1 Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. A total of 38 teams will compete to become the F1 in Schools Champion.

ATHLETICS

Salomon Wadi Bih Run in February

The Salomon Wadi Bih Run, the longest-running expatriate race in the region, will take place in Dibba over two days, on February 6-7, 2015, with new categories for both team relay and solo running options. Runners can register online at <http://www.premieronline.com> on or before January 9.



GOLF

Al Taif team emerge winners

Al Taif team consisting of Bill Harris, John Hunter, Joe Nagel and Jim Yeager were the winners of the friendly Texas Scramble game in the Annual Driver Cup Tournament held at the Yas Links Abu Dhabi Course. Runners-up were Colin Price; David Campbell and Abdullah Al Mazrooqi.

