

'REGULAR TOURNAMENTS CAN BENEFIT UAE HOCKEY'

First DYHC tournament attracts 17 teams in three different categories

By Jai Prasad V. Rai, SPORTS REPORTER

DUBAI Hosting its first ever tournament for youth, the Dubai Youth Hockey Club (DYHC) is determined to take the sport to the next level. Despite having a low presence in the UAE, organisers believe such tournaments will motivate lots of youngsters to opt for the sport in the future.

"We are on a mission to change it," said Nadia Schwarz, coach and organiser of DYHC. "There is little support for hockey at the moment but DYHC now coaches 150 plus children, after having started with only 15 in 2012. So we are growing," she added.

Working closely

The More Dubai Youth Hockey Tournament will be held at Greenfields Community School in Dubai Investment Park on January 31 with 17 teams competing in different age categories.

"I hope we will see proper hockey pitches again. There used to be two at Dubai Sports City, but they got replaced with rugby pitches since they were not making enough money. I understand that from a business perspective



"DYHC coaches 150 plus kids, after having started with only 15"

NADIA SCHWARZ,
ORGANISER

as rugby is massive in comparison to hockey here. So we are hoping more tournaments like this will help generate interest.

"There are also a few visiting teams that come out here in cooler months from the UK, so there is of course lot of potential for the game to grow and prosper here. So if we



SUPPLIED PHOTOS

Good start. DYHC's first tournament on January 31 at Greenfields Community School has attracted 17 teams

can keep it all going along with the adult teams here maybe one day we can get a home for hockey, which in turn would attract more people into the game," Nadia said.

The tournament will see a total of 17 teams - four in under 8's, six in under 11's and seven in under 15's compete for the title.

The participating teams include Horizon International School, Jumeirah English Speaking School, Repton, Victory Heights Primary and DYHC compete in three different age divisions (U-15's, U-11's and U-8's) in an outdoor six-a-side round-robin tournament from 9am to 4.30pm.

"I am really happy with the number of teams who have entered. We have around 170 kids competing on the day which is a good sight," said Nadia.

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Big numbers for schools rugby

Over 900 Emirati students participating in UAE Rugby Al Ain Schools Festival

XPRESS REPORT

AL AIN UAE Rugby Federation's (UAERF) progress in developing the next generation of Emirati rugby players will be very evident on Thursday, where the UAE Rugby Al Ain Schools Festival, in partnership with HSBC, will be played at the Al Ain Equestrian, Shooting and Golf Club.

Hosted by the Al Ain Amblers Rugby Club, 53 teams will compete in the festival with kick-off scheduled for 9am, and last games to be played at 1pm. As an integral step in the Federation's HSBC Player Pathway Programme (PPP) the festival will welcome a total of 900 Emirati students, consisting of 325 girls participating in U10

and U12 divisions, and 575 boys competing in U10, U12, U14 and U16 divisions; each of the age divisions will be played in either a 'Touch' or 'Tag' format.

Working closely

An addition to the 'Touch' and 'Tag' format will be up to 100 boys, incorporating four school teams, playing full contact rugby.

"We have been working very closely with the principals, school administrators and the PE teachers since September (2014) to create this tournament and to have a strong Emirati representation. Currently, there are 47 PE teachers in Al Ain who have been through the IRB's GiR (Get into Rugby) programme and we are pleased to

see their continued involvement and commitment to developing the game," said Sami Smara, UAE Rugby Regional Development Office - Al Ain. "I am very excited to see this festival happen and am looking forward to a great morning of rugby with these students," he added.

Qais Al Dhalai, UAE Rugby's Secretary-General said: "This festival is a great achievement for the Federation, and we consider this tournament a very important stage in the growth of our young Al Ain-based Emirati players. We are very proud of our RDO team, Sami and Ben (Van Rooyen) have been working tirelessly with Al Ain's schools and the students to develop and deliver on this tournament."



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Action unlimited. Of the 900 Emirati students, 325 girls will participate in the under-10 and under-12 categories in Al Ain on Thursday.