
26 teams for netball clash

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A RECORD 26 teams are set to participate in the Riffa Views Inter-Gulf Netball Championships, which will be held at the Bahrain Rugby Football Club (BRFC) in Saar on March 13 and 14.

Twenty-one ladies' teams from Al Ain, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Dubai, Qatar and Kuwait will battle it out for the Cup, Plate and Bowl during the two-day event.

Four men's teams and the award-winning team from Hucclecote Netball Club in England will join them. The men will play in their own division, while the Hucclecote team will play against the top eight ranked Gulf teams in a separate competition called the Invitational Cup.

Dubai leads the field with seven registered teams for the 23rd annual tournament. Top seed Dubai 'A' will have to fend off previous winners Abu Dhabi 'A', who are keen to re-claim the title.

Abu Dhabi spokeswoman Jacqueline Coetzee said: "The Abu Dhabi teams are so excited to return to Bahrain for the Inter-Gulf Championships, which was extremely successful in 2008.

"The tournament is the highlight of the Abu Dhabi netball season and we have a formidable record in the event, which we hope to build on. We are particularly excited to field a men's team, which will be a first for the capital. The three Abu Dhabi teams have been training rigorously and the competitive spirit is high in the camp."

Over 150 matches will be played at the BRFC netball courts over the two-day competition. Teams will be divided into three pools for the first stage of the competition to establish rankings before moving into the finals on the second day in which they will play knockout matches.

Meanwhile, the Riffa Views Bahrain Netball League will enter five ladies' teams and one men's team in this year's tournament. The Bahrain Premier Team (Bahrain 'A') has been training as a unit since September in order to maximise their chances of breaking into the elite 'top four' of the tournament, which has traditionally been dominated by Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Team captain Mel Goosen said: "We've trained extremely hard for this tournament and the dedication from the players has been outstanding. We have strong combinations throughout the court, we have depth on our team and we believe in ourselves. We're really looking forward to the challenge of meeting the top teams this year."

Commented Riffa Views chief executive Richard Browning: "As title sponsors of this tournament, it is gratifying for us to see that Bahrain's reputation as an excellent sporting venue continues to grow. We are pleased to know that this year's tournament attracted a record number of teams. The Bahrain Netball League has done a great job by further improving the tournament and raising its profile throughout the international netball community."

For more information on the competition, contact Michaela Milne on 36600308 or visit intergulfnb.com.
