

# KLHA launches Schools League

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KUALA Lumpur Hockey Association (KLHA) marked another milestone yesterday when they launched a grassroots development initiative aimed at improving interest and the level of hockey among secondary school pupils in Kuala Lumpur.

KLHA yesterday held a brief ceremony with their sponsors, Nestle Products Sdn Bhd and Sapura Holdings Bhd, to launch the 2002 KL Schools Hockey League which will begin on Sunday with 15 teams taking part.

"This joint venture with the State Schools Sports Council is a first for Malaysia and we hope it will benefit hockey in the long run," said KLHA president Tan Sri Noordin Hassan.

The response for the schools league has been tremendous as 15 of the 19 invited schools responded positively. Divided into two groups, the schools will play a single round robin format where the group champions and runners-up will meet in the crossover semifinals.

"A total of 53 matches are expected to be played by the participating schools and the project differs from other competitions held at schools level as it offers participating schools at least seven competitive matches over a period of two months.

"Also the competition rules have been modified to allow each team to register and field all 20 players for league matches. This was done to give all players a chance to show off their skills and give them a sense of participation in every match," said Noordin.

To make it more exciting, each team will be allowed to field eight under-15 players and at any given time, while three or more under-15 players must be on the pitch.

"It is hoped that the inclusion of under-15 players in the under-18 age-group tournament will develop their mental strength, character, attitude and skills to compete with physically bigger players.

"Such a situation is regularly faced by the national team when they meet European opponents and the organisers of this league hope to prepare them by simulating such a physically-competitive arena in the early stage of their life as hockey players," said Noordin.

Apart from providing a platform for more competitive matches, the tournament also offers a base for aspiring teachers to become hockey coaches by handling a team in a league situation.

"The programme has been made possible with the help of Nestle, Sapura and Malay Mail and it is hoped that it will become an annual event and that it extends the hockey playing season for schools.

"At the end of the tournament, 60 players will be selected for advanced training under the supervision of KLHA coaches," said Noordin.

Group A: Sek Men Seri Hartamas, SMK Tinggi Setapak, Sek Men Bukit Bandaraya, St John's Institution, Sek MBS Sentul, SMK Victoria, Sek Men Sungai Besi, Sek Men Alam Shah.

Group B: SMK Kepung Baru, SMK Seri Pantai, Sek Men Vivekananda, SMK Taman Melati, SMK Raja Abdullah, SMK Titiwangsa, Sek Men Sains Selangor.

(END) Source : New Straits Times