



Cathay Pacific/HSBC Hong Kong Sevens retains position as largest event on HSBC Sevens World Series; three teams make debut in 2014

The Hong Kong Rugby Football Union (HKRFU) today announced details of the format and participating teams at next March's Cathay Pacific/HSBC Hong Kong Sevens.

The world-famous tournament will see Hong Kong retain its status as the largest tournament on the HSBC Sevens World Series (HSBC SWS) with 28 participating teams after it was confirmed that Hong Kong would again host an international qualification event for the HSBC SWS.

Three teams will make their debut at the Sevens, American Samoa, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, all of which will play in the qualifier - bringing to 56 the total number of nations or territories represented at the Hong Kong Sevens since 1976.

In addition to the 15 core teams taking part on this season's HSBC SWS, (those participating in all nine HSBC SWS events in 2013/2014), Hong Kong will host a 16th team in the main event and a 12-team international qualifier tournament for a total of 28 participating teams in 2014.

Argentina, Australia, Canada, England, Fiji, France, Kenya, New Zealand, Portugal, Samoa, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, United States of America and Wales are the 15 core teams on this year's HSBC SWS.

After three events on the current Series (Gold Coast, Australia, Dubai, UAE and Port Elizabeth, South Africa), New Zealand lead the Series with 58 points, just two in front of South Africa and 10 in front of Fiji - the other two sides to have won tournaments this season. To date the three HSBC SWS tournaments have been won by three different teams: New Zealand won in Australia, Fiji won for the first time in 15 years in Dubai and South Africa won an emotional South Africa Sevens played in the wake of Nelson Mandela's death.

The 16th team selected to round out the 15-team core competition is yet to be announced by the International Rugby Board (IRB). That team will come from outside of the best remaining non-core teams from each international region, who will play in the HSBC SWS qualifier tournament in Hong Kong.

Previously, the IRB confirmed that to ensure a pathway into the HSBC SWS a direct promotion and relegation format would be in place in 2013/14.

The IRB has awarded Hong Kong the honour of hosting this single qualification event as part of the Cathay Pacific/HSBC Hong Kong Sevens 2014. The winner of the 12-team qualifier will advance directly to a spot on next year's HSBC SWS, replacing the bottom ranked core team after the completion of the 2013/14 season.

The stakes are high for Hong Kong - who along with Japan, will be vying to become the first team from Asia to qualify for a core team spot on the HSBC SWS.

Aside from reinforcing the internationalism and competitiveness of the Cathay Pacific/HSBC Hong Kong Sevens, the qualifier tournament is bolstering the honour roll of international nations and territories to have taken part in the world-famous Hong Kong Sevens to 56 teams since 1976.

The teams in the qualification tournament are also adding some island flair to the tournament, which will be reflected in the competition on Friday of the Sevens. Eight of the 28 participating teams in 2014 come from island nations or territories, 30% of the total participating teams, playing in the world's best Sevens tournament - hosted on Hong Kong island!

The three debut teams in 2014, American Samoa, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago are joined by Cook Islands, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Russia, Tunisia, Zimbabwe and two teams from South America who will be determined at their Regional Sevens Tournament in late January.

Hosting the two tournaments within the event has also occasioned some changes to the schedule to accommodate the 28 participating teams and 70 matches that will be played over the weekend. This year's opening day on Friday will see two rounds of the qualification pool matches played on Friday alongside the opening pool matches of the HSBC SWS core competition in Hong Kong (one match per core team).

For more information about Cathay Pacific/HSBC Hong Kong Sevens 2014, please visit the official website at www.hksevns.com and Facebook page at www.facebook.com/HongKong7s.

About the Hong Kong Sevens

First established in 1976 and organised by the Hong Kong Rugby Football Union, the Hong Kong Sevens is the world's premier international sevens event, marking its 39th year in 2014. In 1999, the Hong Kong Sevens became a part of the International Rugby Board's World Sevens Series. To date, it is the only HSBC Sevens World Series event to host 28 international teams, more than any other tournament, along with the largest prize purse in international sevens (USD150,000). The Hong Kong Rugby Football Union is the only international rugby union to have hosted two Rugby World Cup Sevens in 1997 and 2005.

About Cathay Pacific Airways

Cathay Pacific Airways is a Hong Kong-based airline offering scheduled passenger and cargo services to more than 170 destinations in Asia, North America, Australia, Europe and Africa, using a fleet of 136 wide-body aircraft. The company is a member of the Swire group and is a public company listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. Dragonair is a wholly owned subsidiary of Cathay Pacific, and the airline also has a 60% stake in AHK Air Hong Kong Ltd, an all-cargo carrier operating regional express freight services. Cathay Pacific has made substantial investments to develop Hong Kong as one of the world's leading global transportation hubs. The airline is a founder member of the oneworld global alliance.

About the HSBC Group HSBC Holdings plc, the parent company of the HSBC Group, is

headquartered in London. The Group serves customers worldwide from around 6,600 offices in 80 countries and territories in Europe, the Asia-Pacific region, North and Latin America, and the Middle East and North Africa. With assets of US\$2,723bn at 30 September 2013, the HSBC Group is one of the world's largest banking and financial services organisations.

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