



Saudi Arabia To Host World Snooker Tour Event Kingdom Adds Snooker to Grass Roots Sports Portfolio



Pictured: Barry Hearn (right) with Prince Abdulaziz Bin Turki AlFaisal Al Saud (centre) and Carlo Boutagy (left)

Saudi Arabia has announced it will host a World Snooker Tour event for the first time in 2020. The event, part of the 2020/21 World Snooker Tour calendar, will run from the 4th-10th October 2020 in Riyadh.

The Saudi Arabia Snooker Masters will be a world ranking event with all 128 tour players in the field.

A structured draw will see players seeded 65th to 128th compete in the first round. The 32 winners will face those seeded 33-64, after which the top 32 seeds will enter the draw in the third round.

The tournament also showcases four local players competing against four Tour players seeded 65th to 128th competing in the first round, drawn at random. All players will be required to win at least one match for prize money to count towards their world ranking. Total prize money will be £2.5 million.

The newly formed partnership with World Snooker kick starts a ten-year deal, throughout which the Kingdom aims to raise the profile of snooker at grass roots level.

World Snooker Chairman Barry Hearn said: "This is a giant leap forward for our sport. We have enjoyed tremendous global expansion over the past decade, particularly in Asia and Europe and we are thrilled to stage a new and momentous tournament in the Middle East. We have a packed calendar throughout the year which creates a competitive marketplace for new events. Snooker has grown to such an extent that we are now creating exceptional tournaments at this level."

Hearn added: "For the fans in Saudi Arabia it is a wonderful opportunity to see the best players in the world competing for a huge title. We look forward to working with our partners on delivering a huge event."

WPBSA Chairman Jason Ferguson added: "One of our biggest ambitions is to bring snooker to every corner of the planet so this is a step of huge significance. It gives us a firm footprint in the Middle East and we believe this will be the beginning of a boom for our sport in the region."

Prince Abdulaziz Bin Turki AlFaisal Al Saud, Chairman of the GSA, said: "This partnership adds further to our hosting of a diverse range of international sports in Saudi Arabia. Having held motorsport and boxing events in recent months, and with tennis and equestrian events to follow, we are thrilled to add the Saudi Arabia Snooker Masters, which will see world class snooker played in Saudi Arabia for the first time in 2020.

"Our aim is to provide opportunities to those in our country and region to see the world's best, in a bid to inspire and encourage participation and spectatorship. Part of this ten year agreement sees a commitment from Matchroom to host clinics within universities and schools prior to each tournament to educate and encourage our youth to try snooker."

Carlo Boutagy, CEO of CBX, the official promoter of the event in Saudi Arabia said: "CBX is delighted to introduce snooker at world level to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The union with World Snooker and GSA provides the perfect template to bolster the popularity and awareness of snooker at a grass roots level in Saudi Arabia. We look forward to working with schools and clubs throughout the Kingdom in building snooker as the exceptional sport it is. This competition provides the perfect motivational platform for aspiring snooker players throughout the Kingdom."

He added: "We are extremely proud to begin a new association with Matchroom and World Snooker. Our organisations have a dynamic wealth of expertise in delivering world class sporting events and I'm confident this will be a truly exceptional partnership. The history of the sport, combined with the vision CBX shares as a promoter, means the fans, aspiring future snooker players and current Tour players can look forward to what will be an exceptional tournament."

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Media Enquiries:

World Snooker: Ivan Hirschowitz Ivan.hirschowitz@worldsnooker.com

CBX: Natalie Krushner Nat@cbx.mc

General Sports Authority: Stephen Reid Stephen.Reid@hkstrategies.com