

BUILDING FRIENDSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING THROUGH SPORT

Co-operative ventures in the areas of sport and cultural exchange involving the Kingdoms of Saudi Arabia and Great Britain started with a formal memorandum of understanding in 1987 and have grown to become one of the most powerful expressions of partnership in the world.

Today, the exchange covers a wide range of activities from the transfer of coaching and medical expertise, to the introduction of new sports and pastimes. Touching and enriching the lives of thousands of people each year it has become what was intended by the original signatories to the agreement: a powerful means of building friendship between two countries.

The sports exchange memorandum of understanding was signed in 1987 by HRH the late Prince Faisal bin Fad bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, President of Youth Welfare, signing on behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and David Mellor, Foreign Affairs Minister who signed for the British government.

The first steps in the programme focused on planning and agreement of responsibilities. In 1989, BAE Systems took over day-to-day administrative and operational duties, coordinating activities with the General Presidency for Youth Welfare, the governing body for sport in Saudi Arabia, and various sports bodies in the UK.

Comprised by leading figures from the world of sport in Britain and Saudi Arabia, a Higher Joint Committee was appointed to oversee the programme. Support in smoothing issues of protocol and approval was elicited from the Saudi Embassy in London and the British Embassy in Riyadh.



Saudi Sports TV Journalist Mr. Salman Al Muthawiah's visit to the UK for experience with British Media.



Saudi British Sports Co-operation Programme

Aims

- ❑ To promote understanding between the people of both countries through exchange in the sport and cultural arenas
- ❑ To aid the Saudisation of the sporting scene in the Kingdom, making the country more self-reliant in coaches, administrators, nutritionists, referees, journalists, doctors, photographers, commentators and physiotherapists.
- ❑ To build awareness of the educational and health-giving properties of sport.
- ❑ To provide a platform for young people to travel to and compete in each other's country.
- ❑ To help introduce and popularise new sports.
- ❑ To maximise participation by young people in sport.

Today, the programme has grown to become one of the best examples of collaborative ventures between countries anywhere in the world. The programme has touched and enriched the lives of thousands of people in both countries.

Highlights

Since the programme was agreed in 1987, over 500 separate activities have been staged.

In the past few years, the intensity has increased with 50 events or more featuring each year. The programme faced interrupted travel schedules in 2003 and 2004 due to security concerns but it was still possible to stage more than 50 activities each year. The 15th Joint Meeting concluded in Riyadh on 28th September 2006 and 65 events were reported concluded within previous 12 months.

These activities involve different aspects of exchange: playing matches, participating in training camps, visits to facilities, co-operation in areas of sports regulation and administration, and the training of trainers. What characterises them all is that each represents an investment in the future of sport.

Sport for people with Special Needs has developed in Saudi Arabia specifically as a result of the staging of tournaments with British counterparts. This has built awareness of the issue and has led to the proliferation of facilities in the Kingdom.

Young Saudis help crew HMS Nelson on its voyages around Britain each year. HMS Nelson is a sailing boat using 200-year old systems but is specially geared to those with special needs.

Major sports such as football, athletics, swimming, tennis, cycling, volleyball and basketball have been supported, but so have comparatively minor sports, many of which were new to the Kingdom: