



**PSDIans Shine in 5th GCC All-Filipino Basketball Tournament**  
by Aaron Nepomuceno

The 5th GCC All-Filipino Basketball Tournament held on November 22-23 brought together top teams from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and host Bahrain for an electrifying two-day showdown. Hosted at the Muharraq Sports Club in Bahrain, the event highlighted Filipino athleticism and community spirit in the Gulf region.

The tournament was honored by Her Excellency Anne-Jalando-on Louis, the Philippine Ambassador to Bahrain. She emphasized the significance of fostering camaraderie and promoting Filipino culture through the spirit of sports.

Qatar sent two teams to Bahrain, namely, the U14 and U16 Qatar Juniors Falcons, with the U14 team guided by Head Coach Ephrem Tolentino and Assistant Coach Salah Mekhallet. Moreover, the U16 team led by Head Coach Francis Mercado and Assistant Coaches Reyjie Martin and Gabriel Martin.

The U14 Qatar Junior Falcons, represented by PSDians **Shawn Maya, Rojo Santor, Kirk Reburiano, Kelzo Lerios, Ethan Hermoso, and Marcus Avila**, along with other Filipino ballers from various schools delivered impressive performances. The team achieved a 2-1 record in the preliminaries.

In their opening match, the Falcons battled fiercely but fell short against Dubai Jazzville, 89-103. Determined to bounce back, they came back stronger and crushed Bahrain Eagles with a commanding 124-48 victory. Their final preliminary match was a nail-biting clutch play, as they won their last preliminary match and edged NGB Saudi Arabia, 84-83.

U14 Qatar's strong record in the preliminaries secured them a place in the championship match. In the finals, they went head-to-head with Dubai Jazzville again but were edged out once again, 89-77, securing a second-place finish.

Shawn Maya's superb performance earned him a spot in the Mythical 5 alongside Manalo from NGB Saudi Arabia, #20 from Bahrain Eagles, and Catapang and Evangelista from Dubai Jazzville. Evangelista stood out, claiming both the Season MVP and Finals MVP awards.

Moving on, the U16 Qatar Junior Falcons, including PSDians **Jasper Vistal**, **Naizer Hassan**, and **Andre Bernales**, together with other Filipinos from other schools fought hard in their campaign. The team wrapped up the preliminaries with a 2-2 record.

In their opener, U16 Qatar faced a tough loss to Abu Dhabi. They fought hard in the next match but narrowly lost to Dubai Jazzville, 75-80. After a challenging start with back-to-back losses, the falcons bounced back with fiery determination. They dominated the Bahrain Eagles with a 104-57 blowout victory. The momentum continued in their final preliminary match as they crushed NGB Saudi Arabia in a commanding 95-51 win.

With their 2-2 record their strong finish secured them a spot to earn the bronze medal. In the battle for third place, the team showcased dominance, overpowering NGB Saudi Arabia with a decisive 112-66 victory.

Meanwhile, the championship clash unfolded in dramatic fashion, as Abu Dhabi Mowen triumphed over Dubai Jazzville in an incredible overtime thriller, 79-78, securing the prestigious title. Moreover, Jared Mejia of Qatar earned his place in the Mythical 5, joining #12 from NGB Saudi Arabia, Goc-Ong from Dubai Jazzville, Aguilla and Monghit from Abu Dhabi Mowen. Monghit's exceptional performance throughout the entire competition was undeniable, as the guard took home both the Season MVP and Finals MVP honors.

Here is what three PSDians had to say about their experience.

When asked how the tournament helped him grow as a player and their team, Grade 9 PSD student **Rojo Santor** of U14 said,

**“It's a big exposure for us players because we're playing in different countries and playing against different countries. It helped us to be confident and to show our skills to a big audience, and also to learn new things to improve our skills, leadership and mentality.”**

Meanwhile, when discussing the challenges the team faced and how they overcame them, Grade 9 PSD Student and Mythical 5 Member of U14 **Shawn Maya** said,

**“Unfortunately, one of the biggest challenges we faced was the lack of time to practice before the tournament but because of our determination and will to win, we tried our best to fight as a team. Our coaches' determination and encouragement gave us confidence to showcase our talents and push our limits on court.’**

Maya also mentioned that most of the team members hadn't played together before the event, often as opponents in Qatar. Nevertheless, their shared goal allowed them to build comfort and team chemistry to win.

Lastly, Grade 10 student **Jasper Vistal** of U16 shared his team's mental and physical preparations, in which Vistal stated,

***“We endured hard and intense training; it was physically and mentally draining because we trained harder than usual and I had to balance school and basketball which was exhausting.”***

The 5th GCC All-Filipino Basketball Tournament proved to be much more than just a sporting event. It stood as a powerful testament to the unity and excellence of the Filipino community in the Arabian Gulf. With notable performances and remarkable sportsmanship, the U14 and U16 teams of Qatar left a lasting impression on other audiences and competitors.

PICTURES: Credits: PIBAQ



The entire Qatar GCC Delegation for U14 and U16, along with their coaches, are ready to take on the tournament.



Shawn Maya, a member of the U14 Qatar Junior Falcons, is recognized as a member of the Mythical 5.



Rojo Santor getting ready to drive past his defender with a quick dribble.



Kelzo Lerios goes up for a tough post move layup.



Kirk Reburiano floats the ball into the basket.