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Hockey



Abergavenny Hockey club offered wild card entry to 2014 Hockey World Cup

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By Keir Murray
BBC Sport Scotland

Abergavenny Hockey Club were jubilant to receive the news that they have been offered a wild card entry to the 2014 World Cup.

Both the mens and womens sections were given the news at their End of Season dinner last weekend, but were forbidden from announcing the news until today due to contractual obligations on behalf of the broadcasters

This wild card entry is a new initiative by the FIH and is intended to reward high quality players who might not otherwise have their chance to display their skills on the world stage.

"This is exactly the reward we have been striving for since our 10 year programme was introduced" says Mens captain Luke Rees, with a nod to the efforts made by the coaches in the club over that period.

"We weren't expecting to get the letter at this stage, we thought maybe it would be the 2018 cup, but ho hum that's sport eh?! Everyone in the club is going, everyone has an opportunity and no matter whether you've got 100 caps or one cap, everyone is in the mix for selection. I'm expecting everyone to be wearing regulation shorts and socks. We must remember that this is beaing beamed around the world and having the wrong socks on will not be acceptable.

"It's a fantastic opportunity for us to train in a warm-weather environment and to play against the top-10 teams in the world."

The law graduate is speaking to BBC Wales at Abergavenny's state of the art pitch at Old Hereford Road, on which many battles have been

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contested this season.

We are taking a good blend of experience and youth. We will give the players feedback about what they need to work on for the Commonwealth Games

Nick Fackrell
Abergavenny head coach

All tickets have been sold for the men's and women's competitions. Temporary stands will be built to increase the capacity to 75,000.

For head coach Nick Fackrell the transformation is almost too much to comprehend. You can see the excitement in his eyes when he talks about his team running out to a raucous welcome.

But first the 25-year-old West-Countryman has to continue his efforts to improve the teams and then make the difficult decision

about who should make the final squads of 16. Remembering that this invitation applies to both the men and women squads. "My main concern at the moment is I might need to book extra baggage allowance to fit the First Aid kits and my coaching equipment in. I do have time to ship those out long haul though so hopefully it won't be an issue" beamed the coach.

"I was nearly speech-less" said a delighted Sharon Phillips, ladies captain. "But that doesn't usually last long, so I immediately started to select the team. I think we should be able to get 11"

She says of the trip: "It's such a great opportunity for us to look at the players. I just hope the minibus will be available otherwise it's a long old drive.

"We are taking a good blend of experience and youth. We will give the players feedback about what they need to work on for the Commonwealth Games."

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