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### **Qatar Academy Falcons Begin Season on a Winning Note**

Qatar Academy began its sports season with an impressive title run by the varsity boys volleyball team, claiming the first Near East Schools Activities Conference (NESAC) volleyball championship in Kuwait. The newly-formed NESAC is an exclusive multi event school association comprising of international schools from UAE, Kuwait, Jordan and Qatar. According to Athletics Supervisor Stephen Walker, "NESAC is comprised of five schools, so QA gets to be more familiar with our competition and build stronger connections as a wider community. Our teams are definitely up against very tough competition so we want all of our teams to prepare and compete to the very best of their ability".

The title win by the 10-member boys varsity volleyball squad was a result of the team's collective effort led by team captain Khalid Al Hammadi, finals MVP Omar Al Awad and coaches Andrew Glenville and Andrew Jacob. Shares Walker: "Looking at last year's form the varsity boys volleyball team already has their strengths in place and our swim team will be very hard to beat in our home pool".

The junior varsity and varsity swimmers will have the chance to test their mettle this weekend when QA hosts its first NESAC swimming gala. Over 100 students will contest individual and relay events which are "both challenging and competitive, with all events reflecting the spirit of sportsmanship," Walker says, adding that the presence of Qatar national team members and QA students Jacob Al Khulaifi, Abdulla Abu Ghazala and Noah Al Khulaifi will make the competition more exciting.

"One of the interesting things about sports is that it is not at all predictable and QA's potential this year remains promising. Our boys basketball teams will be very competitive, best chance perhaps is our JV side in our home tournament in March. The girls basketball will continue their improvement. All of our footballers are training hard and are aiming for improved tournament performances. I am also confident we will send a talented cross country and track team to Jordan later in the year".

On the home front, the school is also working on increasing participation from middle school students (grade 6-8), making sure that students enjoy learning the basic skills and fundamentals to play each sport well. There is an increased emphasis on the under 14 age group with more practice games and players flowing through to NESAC with higher skill levels. Locally, the QA will still play in QUESS events and organize friendlies with other schools. There is also the Qatar Foundation Boys U19 Football League which is played weekly in Education City.

"Sports build physical fitness and promote a healthy lifestyle. It also helps develop positive relationships," Walker says. "Most of all for us, it helps create our identity at QA, it builds our community spirit and develops pride in what we are doing and achieving".