

Saudi Arabia to host 2024 West Asian Football Federation Women's Championship – the Kingdom's first-ever official 11-a-side women's football tournament

- *Upcoming 2024 WAFF Women's Championship hailed as "the next big step" for women's football in Saudi Arabia*
- *Competition welcomes seven teams alongside host nation and runs from 19-29 February*

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – 5 February 2024: Saudi Arabia will host the 2024 West Asian Football Federation (WAFF) Women's Championship this month – the first official 11-a-side women's tournament ever held in the Kingdom.

A milestone moment for women's football in Saudi Arabia, the 2024 WAFF Women's Championship will take place from 19-29 February in the coastal city of Jeddah with the upcoming eighth edition set to welcome eight teams.

The host nation will be joined by Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and two guests – Guam and Nepal. The tournament will begin in group stage format with two groups of four, followed by the semi-finals and final with matches played at the King Abdullah Sports City and Prince Abdullah Al-Faisal Sports City stadiums.

The WAFF Women's Championship is the latest international football tournament making its way to Jeddah, where the 2023 FIFA Club World Cup had recently been held. Jeddah also played host to the 2022 WAFF Futsal Championship where the national team rose to the occasion in front of its home fans and ended the tournament in second place with a silver medal.

This upcoming edition also marks the Saudi Arabia women's national team's first-ever appearance in the WAFF Women's Championship, as well as the first competition under Lluís Cortes, the new head coach. Since his appointment in December, the team has kicked off a new era in impressive fashion under the former Barcelona treble-winning coach, recording successive 2-0 victories against Syria.

Lamia Bahaian, Vice President of the Saudi Arabian Football Federation, said: "We're absolutely thrilled to be hosting the WAFF Women's Championship. Looking ahead to what promises to be a brilliant tournament, we're especially excited about the impact this will have in terms of inspiring women and young girls across the Kingdom while supporting women's football development nationally and regionally.

"The individual and collective success of our domestic leagues, together with our success in hosting two editions of the SAFF Women's Friendly Tournament and the 2022 WAFF Futsal Championship, shows that the foundations are in place for us to take the next big step in our journey. This means hosting an official 11-a-side competition. We're excited to welcome members of the wider football ecosystem together for an incredible event – one that's certain to showcase the full power of football as a force for good and a platform for turning dreams into reality."

Commenting on the announcement, WAFF General Secretary Khalil Al Salem thanked SAFF for its continuous engagement and support for women's football in the West Asia region, highlighting the two parties' shared vision of nurturing women's football and driving growth throughout the ecosystem.

Al Salem added: "For WAFF, our mission has always been to promote football development by various means – including by organising championships across territories and paving the way for countries to compete and fans to become inspired. This announcement is the latest testament that our direction of travel is positive. With the WAFF Women's Championship heading to Saudi Arabia, teams are competing in official competition in a new setting – with more opportunities to test themselves at the international level in front of audiences whose number one passion is football.

“There is no doubt that this tournament will witness high-level competition and exceptional organisation, building on the Saudi Arabian Football Federation's successful track record in hosting football tournaments at various levels.”

Women's football in Saudi Arabia is going through an exciting period of progress. The senior women's national team's first-ever match in 2022 and entry into the FIFA world rankings in 2023 were milestone moments for women's football in the Kingdom, while the Women's Premier and First Division Leagues have sparked greater interest and participation with matches broadcast nationwide and globally.

Additionally, the number of female players, clubs, and referees is growing nationally. Since 2021, the number of professional female players in Saudi Arabia has increased by 195%, with the number of clubs up by 56% and women's national teams up by 300%. The number of women's football coaches has risen by 797%, coaching courses by 557%, and referees by 66%.

New grassroots initiatives and infrastructure projects are also building a promising future for women's football in Saudi Arabia.

For more information on Saudi football, please visit the [SAFF website](https://www.saff.org.sa).

For 2024 WAFF Women's Championship news and updates, follow the Federation's social channels.

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ABOUT THE SAUDI ARABIAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION (SAFF)

Established in 1956, the Saudi Arabian Football Federation (SAFF) is a member of FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), and the governing body for football in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia responsible for overseeing grassroots development and all aspects of the amateur and professional game.

SAFF is in charge of elevating Saudi football to new heights, offering new opportunities across the ecosystem and inspiring the nation to participate and become an influential force for good within world football. SAFF currently administers 17 competitions for a total of 600+ teams across various age groups, most notably the annual King's Cup and Saudi Super Cup.

SAFF manages nine national teams ranging from the U-15 age group all the way to the first team, all of which compete in 23 regional and international competitions. As part of its significant investment in women's football, it recently established the first women's national team and league. It is responsible for the development and upskilling of over 3,000 national coaches and 1,700 referees across the Kingdom.

ABOUT THE WEST ASIAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION (WAFF)

The West Asian Football Federation “WAFF”, founded in 2000 upon the initiative of HRH Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein, is a Regional Association of football governed under the Asian Football Confederation “AFC” and Federation Internationale de Football Association “FIFA”, comprised of 12 Member Associations.

WAFF is a non-governmental organization (NGO) and is one of the five Asian Regional Federations that include West Asian Football Federation, East Asian Football Federation, South Asian Football Federation, Central Asian Football Federation, and ASEAN Football Federation. WAFF is headquartered in Amman, Jordan.