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## Marketing international sports in the United Arab Emirates

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MARKETING INTERNATIONAL SPORTS IN  
THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Interdisciplinary Studies

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by  
Khaled Mohammed Khouri  
March 2003

MARKETING INTERNATIONAL SPORTS IN  
THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

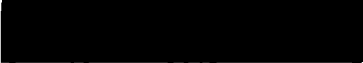
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## ABSTRACT

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) became the international sports capital for major sporting events gaining international recognition as a sports center as well as a tourism place. Only recently has the UAE been recognized as a prosperous and attractive ground for tourists and residents, especially after the discovery of oil and establishing a place in the world markets. Marketing however can create more industries, and the sports industry is certainly ahead.

The project aimed to determine the feasibility of establishing a web site to promote international games worldwide by: making the sporting facilities in the UAE available to the world, and promoting international sports to attract more visitors to enjoy the facilities available. This idea may create industries which lessen the dependency on oil exports in the UAE economic growth.

The project already recognized all the required elements to assure success. The elements included theoretical bases and organization, limitations, definitions, review of literature, economy, sports, accommodations, methodology, and finally marketing on the Internet.

The project is in its final stage. I am continuing to conduct research regarding sports in the UAE. Recent articles have been beneficial in providing more up to date information to the study. I learned that the FIFA World Youth Championship UAE 2003 will be held in UAE, which will be added to the report. Invitations have been set around the globe enticing horse owners to race their best horse in the Dubai on March 29<sup>th</sup>, for the \$15 million cup, the richest in the world.

Other important sporting events are planned which I am attempting to find out more information about so that I can incorporate these games into the web site that is planned for the Internet, and designed so that it will reach those interested throughout the world.

I am working on how to put all this information together to make it exciting for those who most likely would be interested in either participating in the event, or coming to the UAE to see the event, and also to attract more people to advance tourism in the country.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Sports are a major interest in practically every country. Since the expansion of sports, primarily through the Olympics, sports have gained international attention. Today, it is common for teams of one country to play against teams of another country with the objective of obtaining worldwide recognition as being the best at a particular sport in the world. International sports have become an industry with various countries building stadiums and athletic facilities for the purpose of attracting international games. In addition to the Olympics which are held in some country every four years, soccer, horse racing, tennis, baseball, football, boat racing, and other sports are played at different times.

#### Background

Before the discovery of oil in the Middle East, sports were limited to those within the different countries based primarily within the educational system. From time to time, camel racing, boat racing, some soccer, and the traditional sport of falconry were the main sports of interest. This was primarily due to the fact that the Gulf countries had limited resources. The discovery of



oil beginning in the late 1930s, completely changed the landscape. Revenues from the oil have been used to modernize the various countries. New schools were built, and sports began to play a larger role in education as well as in society. Increased interest was stimulated with the introduction of television, programs, sports, and news events, breaking down borders between countries as airlines expanded to accommodate interest in world wide travel. The world became smaller. Interest in events taking place in other countries increased. In the Middle East, new stadiums were built, and young people were encouraged to participate in sports if for nothing more than for health purposes.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) became the international sports capital for major sporting events. International recognition has been given for staging spectacular events and invitation tournaments in the UAE especially in sports such as golf, tennis, and snooker. These events attract world class international sportsmen increasing awareness of such competitive sports in the UAE, encourage wider participation as well as assisting in the drive to promote tourism.

This is evidenced by the sporting facilities built and national enthusiasm. These facilities have motivated

other Gulf countries to become involved in the various competitive sports. As a result, sports have become very important as an enjoyable activity. In addition to world class facilities that are the envy of many international sportsmen and women, a number of UAE sportsmen have gained world class recognition for their own achievement including, among others, world champions in bowling and powerboat racing together with several international chess masters (Sports in UAE, 1997).

#### Statement of the Problem

Sport facilities in the UAE are many. One example is the Abu Dhabi's coliseum-like Zayed Sports City which accommodates 65,000 spectators and equipped for international events, both indoors and outdoors can easily be turned into a full fledged Olympic Village. The center also houses the headquarters for the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the UAE Soccer Association (Sports in UAE, 1997).

The overall performance of the UAE's economy has been heavily dependent on oil exports, which account for about 30 percent of total gross domestic product (GDP). Growth in real GDP has slowed to 1.8 percent in 2001, largely as a result of cuts in oil export revenues, but it was

expected to recover in 2002, and 2003. Due to the fact that the oil market is unstable, and competition in the market is increasing adding to the instability of the world market, and the fact that oil is a depleting resource, the government has invested heavily in turning the UAE into the jewel of the Middle East. Tourist attractions have been established in every emirate. Modern hotels with hundreds of guest rooms, executive restaurants, swimming pools and golf courses can be found in every major city. The desert itself has been turned into a playground for people from every country to enjoy. With all of the facilities that have been built, it is believed that more marketing effort should be made relative to international sporting events that will increase revenues and bring greater attention to the UAE. It is believed this can be achieved at relatively low cost by creating a web site for international sporting events being held in the UAE. This will enable the UAE to promote international games and invite people from all over the world to visit the country and take advantage of what this federation has to offer the world. In this way, less dependence will be placed on oil revenues, and the plans for continued modernization of the emirates can continue (Feld, 2002).

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project is to determine the feasibility of establishing a web site to promote international games worldwide. The objectives are: to make the sporting facilities in the UAE available to the world, and to promote international sports to attract more visitors to enjoy the facilities available; to increase the UAE's sports industry making it known worldwide, and benefiting from the revenues that such games could attract to lessen dependency on oil for economic growth.

## Theoretical Bases and Organization

The present research does not correspond with other studies as none have been found that focuses on the same objectives. It is based on the assumption that since the government of the UAE has spent millions of dollars, providing the highest state-of-the-art sport facilities they need to be used; and the federation needs to find other sources of revenues to reduce dependence on oil as the major source of income. This can be achieved using marketing strategies that are now available on the Internet which can be seen around the world.

### Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to international sporting events held and could be held in the sport facilities in the UAE, and data available on the subject selected from the Internet, magazines, newspapers, and texts.

### Definition of Terms

International Sports: Competitive games played by teams or individuals from different countries for the purpose of achieving the title of the world's best athlete or team in a particular sport, e.g., soccer, football, tennis, horse racing, etc.

UAE: The United Arab Emirates, a federation made up of seven emirates, located in the Middle East, bordering the Persian Gulf.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### The Country

The UAE is a federation of seven independent states located in the southeastern corner of the Arabian peninsula. It is bordered by the Persian Gulf to the north, Saudi Arabia to the south and west, and Oman and the Gulf of Oman to the east. Its seven member states are: Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Al Fujairah, Ras al Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm al Qaiwain. The emirates cover a land area of 32,300 square miles. The capital is Abu Dhabi, located in the emirate of the same name, and the nation's largest city. The official language is Arabic, although English is widely spoken, as are Hindi, Urdu, and Farsi.

The UAE is a small country with an estimated population of approximately three million people made up of 61 percent Arabs, South Asian (22 percent), Iranian (8 percent), and other expatriates (9 percent). Ninety six percent of the people follow the Islamic religion (Sunni), while 4 percent mainly Indians, are Hindu (Lonely Planet, 2003).

The UAE is a member of the United Nations (UN), the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the

Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the organization of the Islamic Conference. The currency is the Dirham. Sheikh Zayed ibn Sultan Al Nuhayyan has been head of state since the UAE's formation and independence from Great Britain in 1971 (Lonely Planet, 2003).

The government is a federated monarchy, with each emirate being independent but under one flag and one approved permanent constitution.

#### Industry

Major industries include oil, gas, petrochemicals, fishing, and tourism. Major trading partners are: United States, the European Union, Japan, South Korea, and India.

The UAE contains proven crude oil reserves of 97.8 billion barrels, or slightly less than 10 percent of the world total. Abu Dhabi holds 94 percent of this amount or about 92.2 billion barrels. Dubai contains an estimated 4.0 billion barrels, followed by Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah, with 1.5 billion and 100 million barrels of oil respectively. Proven reserves have doubled in the last decade, mainly due to significant increases in rates of recovery. Abu Dhabi has continued to identify new finds,

especially offshore, and to discover new oil rich structures in existing fields (Feld, 2002).

The UAE has two large refineries, and five smaller ones. Natural gas reserves have been estimated at 212 trillion cubic feet, the world's fifth largest after Russia, Iran, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. The largest reserves are located in Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Dubai, and Ras al-Khaimah (Feld, 2002).

The non-oil sector presently contributes more than two thirds of the UAE's total GDP, and about 30 percent of its total exports. The federal government has invested heavily in sectors such as aluminum production, tourism, aviation, re-export commerce, and telecommunications. As part of its strategy to further expand its tourism industry, the UAE is building new hotels, restaurants, shopping centers, expanding airports and duty free zones. Organizations such as the Abu Dhabi National Hotels Company, Dubai's Commercial Marketing and Tourism Department, and Fujairah's Tourism Bureau take a leading role promoting tourism in the UAE (United Arab Emirates Handbook [UAEH], 1998).

Dubai has become a central Middle East hub for trade and finance, accounting for about 70 percent of the



Emirates' non-oil trade. It is often called the Hong Kong of the Middle East (UAEH, 1998).

In 1999, Dubai announced the building the world's first free trade zone of business done over the Internet. The city expects to attract all businesses in the Internet related industry from venture capitalists to software and media developers. The city will include a research and development center, a science and technology park, and an Internet university, offering short courses in e-commerce, design and management (Gardner, 1999).

#### The Economy

In the short period since the establishment of the state, the UAE has been transformed as a result of a sustained development program which has witnessed the completion of a sophisticated modern infrastructure, encompassing high rise, architecturally innovative cities, efficient industrial complexes, impressive airports and ports, multi-laned highways, well equipped schools, hospitals, subsidized housing, the widespread provision of electricity and water, as well as a technologically advanced communication network (UAEH, 1998, p. 24).

The UAE has an open economy with a high per capita income and a sizable annual trade surplus. Its primary

wealth is based on oil and gas output. In spite of higher oil revenues in 1999-2000, the government has not drawn back from the economic reforms implemented during the 1998 oil price depression. The government has increased spending on job creation and infrastructure expansion and is opening up its utilities to greater private-sector involvement.

The GDP is estimated at \$40 billion, with GDP per head at \$17,400, viewed as being one of the wealthiest nations in the world. Annual growth rate is 5 percent with inflation holding at 5 percent (Country Report, 2001, p. 2).

The current focus of the economy is on the non-oil sector. These activities include: government and related services, trade, restaurants, and hotels construction, manufacturing, and the financial banking and insurance sector. The UAE has taken steps to develop the re-export market which has experienced steady growth. Traditionally growth in trade was linked to sea transport. Now, however, air and land transport are also major factors in trade development in the UAE (UAEH, 1998, p. 28).

The manufacturing sector is growing rapidly and is expected to contribute significantly to future economic diversification. The major areas of non-oil manufacturing

industries involve aluminum, chemicals, rubber, beverages and paper. Much of the manufacturing activity is centered on free trade zones such as the one at Jebel Ali which now ranks as the fifth largest of its kind worldwide (UAEH, 1998, p. 29).

The services sector is another major growth area with tourism being a significant contributor to non-oil GDP. In 1983, the total number of visitors to the UAE was 0.373. Current figures are well in excess of two million annually. Exhibitions, trade shows, conferences, and sports held in the many state-of-the-art exhibition centers have contributed significantly to expansion in the tourism sector. Major exhibitions are bringing visitors from all over the world. Organizations such as the Abu Dhabi National Hotels Company, Dubai's Commercial Marketing and Tourism Department and Fujairah's Tourism Bureau take a leading role in promoting tourism in the UAE (UAEH, 1998, p. 32).

### Sports

One of the priorities emphasized by Sheikh Zayed is the building of sports facilities throughout the UAE. More than two decades ago he encouraged young people to become involved in sports. At that time it was primarily for

health purposes, but he also recognized the importance of citizen participation in sports and leisure activities. Through his guidance and government support, stadiums were built, soccer fields established, golf courses were created, bowling alleys were built, along with basketball courts, cricket fields and ice hockey rinks. The promotion of sports has given the UAE international recognition while at the same time, traditional sports continue to be supported such as camel racing and falconry at the local levels (Sports, n.d.).

The following sports are identified as major international sports, the primary focus of this study, but these sports are only a few of the major sporting events that are taking place each year within the UAE. With all of its sport activities and sports facilities, it should be called the sports capital of the world.

#### Horse Racing

The UAE are famous for their contribution to international horse racing. One of the major developments of recent years has been the practice of training horses raced on the international circuits in the UAE during winter months. Dubai's Godolphin establishment is an impressive stabling and training facility that has become winter home for some of the world's finest race horses. It

is now widely recognized that the Emirates offers a unique combination of excellent stables equipped with state of the art training facilities in a safe, clean environment, together with top class trainers; access to world-class veterinary facilities. (Dubai has an internationally renowned Equine hospital to which horses are brought from all over the world) and the climate is ideal for developing peak Equine health and fitness (Al-Zarouni, 1997, p. 3).

Dubai possesses two state of the art racetracks; the left handed flat track at Nad al-Sheba and a right handed track with an uphill finishing stretch at Jebel Ali. Over a billion people, around the globe, watched the world's richest ever horse race, the \$4 million Dubai World Cup, held in March 1996 at Dubai's and al Sheba floodlit race-track. Dubai is said to be the place where East meets West at the horse races. In 1996, the World Arabian Horse Organization held a major conference in Abu Dhabi, the first time it had met in any of the Gulf countries (Al-Zarouni, 1997, p. 4-5).

#### Football (Soccer)

The UAE Football Association was established in 1971 and joined FIFA in 1972, followed by both the Arab Football and the Asian soccer federations in 1974. (Soccer

is called football in the UAE.) Soccer is the most popular spectator sport in the UAE. Promotion of the sport through football clubs at schools and colleges as well as at local regional and national levels has paid dividends in terms of training the standard of the game in the UAE.

Twenty-six football clubs, each with around 150 players are currently affiliated with the UAE Football Association (Al-Zarouni, 1997, p. 6).

### Boat Racing

From ancient times boat racing has been a sport attractive to men. National pride in the customs and skills of a bygone era is a priceless attribute of the UAE's cultural heritage that has been preserved as a result of Sheikh Zayed's strong belief in building upon past strengths. Pearl diving and sailing may no longer form essential ingredients of the UAE's survival but the character building influences of this previous era are valued and appreciated by a new generation who remain in touch with the sea and maritime skills. Along with the rowing races, traditional sailing races are also held at regular intervals during the period October to April (Al-Zarouni, 1997, p. 7).

Modern sailing is an increasingly popular sport in the UAE. A less conventional but extremely popular form of

sailing, windsurfing also has a strong following in the Emirates with the Au Dhabi Boardwalkers Club holding weekly competitions throughout the summer. Powerboat racing is one field in which the UAE excels at the international level and it has played a key role in hosting a series of major events including world championship races. Saeed al Tayer's world championship win in 1995 was marred by the tragic accidental death of fellow team member Hamed Buhaleeba at a race in southern England. The Victory Team continues to compete in the class One World Offshore Championships and the Formula one World championships for circuit boats (Al-Zarouni, 1997, p. 7-8).

### Golf

Twenty-five years ago golfers wanting to practice their sport did so in oiled sand and putting on "browns" rather than on greens. One of the most remarkable achievements the UAE has made is the development of eight golf clubs with more courses under development. Two of these courses host international events such as the Dubai Desert Classic, attracting world class golfers who have nothing but praise of the fairways and beautiful manicured greens, seems little short of a miracle. Such events have made Dubai's golf courses well known to competitors and

the public at large since they were televised on major sports channels. The 1996 Desert Classic saw the prize purse raised to a million dollars and attracted 10 of the top 12 Ryder Cup star tighter with some of the best golfers from Asia. UAE golfers have now taken the game with enthusiasm and are making their own waves on the regional tournament circuit. The UAE Golf Association is committed to encouraging golf from junior level right up the ranks. Taking a professional approach to its work it has its sights firmly set on building up the national team to a level where they can take on top international players (Al-Zarouni, 1997, p. 9).

The schedule of events for the Dubai Desert Classic begins on March 4, 2003 lasting through Sunday, March 9<sup>th</sup>. The international players will compete for the coveted Championship Trophy. Interest in sponsorship is at an all time high. This year it is expected that the Desert Classic will be one of the most exciting sporting events of the year in the Middle East (Dubai Golf, 2003).

Tiger Woods agreed to return to Dubai. This is indicative of the standing Dubai has gained at the very top levels of international sports as a host and a state of the art venue (Azzeez, 2002).



## Cricket

Sharjah is the capital of cricket in the UAE with the Emirates Cricket Board, its official association. Not only does Sharjah host local and national cricket matches but it also is the home to some major international events on the cricket calendar (Dubai Golf, 2003).

## Chess

The UAE has a very active Chess Federation that organizes domestic tournaments as well as participation of the UAE team in international championships. International tournaments are held with more than 300 participants from various countries. UAE chess players have been successful winning awards (United Arab Emirates, 2002).

## Tennis

Tennis is a much favored sport in the UAE, both at amateur and professional levels. The Dubai Tennis Open is a week of serious competition for the world's top stars as well as a time of entertainment for families in the UAE. Surrounding events help to promote tennis and to show through fun games and competitions how easy and accessible the game can be for all ages and levels of competence (United Arab Emirates, 2002).

Nine of the world's top 14 players competed in the 1999 Dubai Tennis Open. Reigning ladies and men's

Wimbledon champions Venus Williams and Yevgeny Kafelnikov will be heading a list of stars when the Dubai Tennis championship gets underway at the Dubai tennis Stadium from February 19 - 22 (godubai.com, 2002).

### Accommodations

The government's decision to create a tourist industry required that the private sector support the plan and build accommodations for visitors. In the last twenty years the major cities have been transformed from a small trading village to a metropolitan city equal to other major cities such as London, New York, and San Francisco. Accommodations in the UAE are of very high standards and many of the world's top hotel chains run five star hotels. The most famous and the most spectacular is the Burj Al Arab in Dubai. All hotels are outstanding examples of modern architecture. Facilities are generally exceptional with swimming pools, tennis courts, and fully equipped health centers, and leisure facilities being the norm. Many have a number of restaurants and some of the larger ones offer as many as 14. Most waterfront hotels have excellent beaches and extensive water sports facilities. Prices range from Dh 300 to Dh 500 per night (and higher),

with some 430 hotels listed on the Internet (UAE Interact, 2002).

The sport events can be designed along with tourism, offering those attending various sporting events with opportunities to visit many of the sites that have been designed to encourage tourists. This includes museums, parks, golfing, horse racing (which is done on a weekly basis in some areas), camel racing, ice skating, soccer games, along with high quality plays ballets, symphonies, movies, and other events.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

The methodology selected for this study is a review of literature relative to the UAE and the role of tourism and sports in the federation. A study of the different sports played within the UAE has been reviewed and those enjoyed by the most participants selected for more extensive marketing strategies. Each sport has its own e-mail address. The current web sites have been reviewed and are totally inadequate for promoting sports in the UAE, especially international sports.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MARKETING ON THE INTERNET

Many companies and organizations have benefited from promoting their products on the Internet. As time passes and increasing numbers of people view computers as being a necessity in both business and industry, the Internet gains new customers and potential customers on a daily basis. In the U.S., Amazon.com pioneered commercializing the book industry several years ago. Since that time, Amazon has added a number of products to its line. The company has also pioneered the way in which web sites should be designed and how they should be used on the Internet. As a result, they have been successful selling everything from books, videos, music, electronics, and drugs, to name a few. The strategy has been to provide the potential customer with the information wanted, and in the most attractive way possible.

Many of the sports events currently have a web site on the Internet. However, they were very ineffective, do not provide sufficient information about the sport, give sufficient information about the UAE in general and what the country has to offer the sports industry. While

previous events may be shown, often there is no information about forthcoming events for the New Year.

The international games being held in the UAE could benefit from using the same procedures designed to attract those who are interested in attending international events, and who are potential customers even though they had never considered attending games or being a tourist in the Middle East. The following is an example.

#### Dubai Racing Carnival

The racing carnival is planned for beginning February 13 through March 29, 2003. The event encompasses seven weeks of top caliber racing and features races. The Dubai Racing Carnival aims to attract international prestigious races. The Carnival incorporates a series of seven social events. Each event will be themed as Fillies and Fashion events, a Family Day, and super Saturday featuring preparatory races for the Dubai World Cup.

#### The Dubai World Cup

Each year, the Dubai World Cup is a major event in horse racing. It is the aim of the event to compete successfully against the best from around the world. It is today, among the more recent international racing's challenging event and they are constantly looking and

implementing new ideas to ensure its success.

International horse racing needs a number of elements to make it successful. The World Cup Committee has built an infrastructure where everything is available to each individual's requirements, whether it is an owner, trainer, jockey, groom, the media, or guests (Dubai World Cup, 1).

The next World Cup event will be held at Nad Al Sheba on March 29<sup>th</sup> (2003) for the eighth running of the world's richest race. The Dubai World Cup is the perfect opportunity to showcase Dubai to the world, and feature the enormous steps that have been made in the fields of commerce, communications, and tourism (Dubai World Cup, 2002).

Sponsorship opportunities are offered to by the Dubai Racing Club and Dubai World Cup to participate as a series sponsor or an event sponsor (Dubai Racing Carnival, 2002).

#### Proposed Web Site

The Dubai World Cup is a well known international event and one that those interested in viewing horse racing, as well as wanting to enter their own horse in the event would want to know about. Using the Dubai Racing Club and Dubai World Cup as an example of what needs to be

done in the way of marketing these events, the following marketing strategy is proposed:

Designing a web site that includes pictures of winners of the World Cup in the past, a schedule of events forthcoming, approximately six months before events are to occur, an outline of the events, days they will take place, and hours.

The web site will also include a form to be filled out for those wanting to attend the events, the number that will be attending, along with costs, information relative to accommodations available, names of hotels, prices for rooms, and amenities. Added to the web site will be one page that contains various tourist sites that are available for visiting within the same area in which the sporting events are held, usually either Abu Dhabi or Dubai, but other events and interesting sites are also held in other emirates. The airlines that fly into the UAE will also be noted, and additional information made available if the visitor wants to make his own travel arrangements.

A page should also be added for those who want to participate in the event or if they want to sponsor a certain event. Additional information regarding requirements for participation would be added, and an



e-mail address provided where they would contact the commission supporting the event for more detailed information about accommodations for horses, jockeys, groomers, etc. In other words, the web site should be well designed, attractive, and provide information about the events that would motivate viewers of the site who want to obtain additional information about the event and about the UAE and who may want to enter the international event.

### Chess

An international chess club was organized in Abu Dhabi in 1991. A festival is held on an annual basis with chess players from all over the world participating. The club was created to give UAE players more opportunity for getting experience to compete at the international level. The festival is hosted by the Abu Dhabi Chess and Culture Club at the cooperation with the cultural foundation. Year after year since 1991, the Chess Festival is still featuring new dimensions of continuous successes.

The International Masters Tournament was listed in the 4<sup>th</sup> festival in 1994 for the first time, where 41 countries were represented. The 5<sup>th</sup> festival witnessed a new developing steps as it included a number of new tournaments such as Scyhevingen for all age groups, ladies, girls, and children tournament, the international

countries were represented in this great chess assembly. The club continues to hold the international festivals each year. The UAE Chess Federation has an excellent reputation for hosting all kinds of international activities regardless of their size and nature, and they do everything possible to make the events a memorable event. Some UAE chess players have won tournaments reflecting the interest of the game in the country (Abu Dhabi Chess Club, 2002).

The largest building dedicated to Chess was built in 1995. The hall can be used for different purposes but is designed mainly for chess tournaments. In the hall is a control room for managing tournaments and activities, equipped with sound and light systems that suit the activities of the Club, besides the computer room that provides services for players and members, although the emphasis is on the benefit of the players. The hall also contains a large library that serves the visitors and members of the club and which is designed so as to provide the reader with the required calm atmosphere and easy handling in terms of fixture, capabilities, and location on the first floor of the club next to the management offices. The main building also includes a reception hall equipped with appropriate systems and decoration. A

snooker and billiard room is located on the second floor. A cafeteria opened for visitors and players, with all such facilities aimed at creating sociable surroundings for the members besides practicing the chess activity (Abu Dhabi Chess Club, 2002).

The Abu Dhabi International Chess event would greatly benefit from a well designed site for the tournaments that are held each year. Information about the web site is important as the current site does not provide sufficient information to encourage or motivate a chess player to enter the international event.

A well designed web site providing information about the international tournament should appear on the site probably some six months before the tournament is to take place. This will provide sufficient time for those desiring to attend the matches, or to participate in the matches, to make arrangements for the trip.

Similar to that proposed for the World Cup, sufficient information should be provided in the Web site so that a person interested in Chess and had the qualifications to participate, would have sufficient time to make arrangements to attend the event and make travel arrangements.

## Golf Tournaments

Golf has become very popular in the UAE. Golf courses can be found in most of the emirates especially in the larger cities. The UAE Golf Association (UGA) was formed in 1996. It is overseen by a Board of Directors under the General authority and Sports Welfare and is affiliated with the Royal and Ancient Golf Club, the Asia Pacific Golf Confederation, the GCC Golf Committee and the Arab Gulf Federation. The UGA promotes and supports the Dubai Desert Classic. The UGA is a non-profit making organization that has a three fold mission:

- Increase the awareness of golf in UAE
- Junior Development
- National Golf Team

In 1998, an extensive Junior Development Program for children aged 7 - 15 of nationals and expatriates, was started with over 130 children throughout the UAE (UAE Golf Association, 2001). A junior national team participated in the prestigious tournaments in Malaysia and Lebanon in 1999. The tournament in Beirut tied in with the launch of the 1999-2000 Junior Development Program in September 1999 (United Arab Emirates, 2002). This reflects continued interest in Golf.

Golf tournaments are held at the Nad Al Sheba Golf Course, an 18 hole fully floodlit course and driving range which is open until midnight every day. The course is a traditional links style golf course reminiscent of the home of golf, St. Andrews in Scotland with double greens and deep bunkers. The course is supplied by one million liters of water per night. Almost 300 lights bathe the course when the sun goes down enabling competitive golf until midnight. It is very popular. The facilities are designed for international golf tournaments. Tour operators, hotels, and international visitors are required to secure bookings up to 12 months in advance (Nad Al Sheba Club, 2003).

These events in themselves should attract golf enthusiasts either for playing golf, attending a tournament, or taking a vacation in the UAE. The current web sites identify the sport, show pictures of the facilities, and telephone and fax numbers for bookings. More golfers would be attracted to the UAE to either play golf or to attend a tournament if more information was provided such as a calendar of events, hotel accommodations, costs involved, and available tourist sites that could be added to their golfing experience.

## Football/Soccer

Football (Soccer) remains the most popular spectator sport in the UAE. Promotion of the sport is through football clubs at schools and colleges, as well as at local, regional, and national levels has paid dividends in terms of raising the standard of the game in the UAE. Twenty-six football clubs, each with around 150 players, are currently affiliated with the UAE Football Association. UAE soccer fans are unlikely to forget the Singapore Qualification Rounds for the 1990 World Cup where their National Team gained its passport to Italy. It did so by scoring 2 - 1 against China, reaching scoreless draws with North Korea and Saudi Arabia, and with Qatar and South Korea. It has been these successes that have kept continued interest and promotion of the sport. The UAE participates in many different games, and is prepared to host games both local and international (Sports in UAE, 1997).

Soccer is the most popular game in the Middle East, and many other areas of the world. In the Middle East, games are played on an international basis as well as a local basis. To accommodate the game, large stadiums have been built in both Dubai and Abu Dhabi. These stadiums hold thousands of visitors. UAE soccer teams compete with

teams all over the world. Plans are for the 14<sup>th</sup> FIFA U20 World Youth Championship for 2003 will be held between March 25 and April 15, 2003 in the UAE (The SportScheduler, 2003).

The UAE and the facilities that are available would be better served with an effective web site that provides more information. Current web sites do provide information about soccer events, but the UAE needs to have a web site that shows the unique benefits of these international events to be held in the country.

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