

Extra carrot as championship kicks off (ACT)

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Competitors at this week's national futsal championships in Canberra received extra motivation when Football Federation Australia said yesterday the winning open men's team would gain entry to an Asian champions competition.

The FFA's high performance manager John Boulton officially opened the national futsal titles yesterday and announced plans for a new Asian Football Confederation Champions League tournament for futsal in July.

Boulton also said the FFA was running an extensive review into futsal, asking everyone at this week's championships and people involved in the sport around Australia to complete an online survey. Futsal now comes under the governing body of FIFA, also the world governing body for outdoor soccer and in turn, Australia is revamping its futsal program.

"The whole situation of futsal is difficult, there is some issues about the governance of futsal world-wide, countries all over the world are battling this and we are here as well," Boulton said.

"We are undertaking a review at the moment which will be finished in a couple of months that will recommend new structures, new governance and a futsal development plan from the grass-roots up to the national level and that's the first time that's happened."

This year's futsal championships will also have roving selectors watching the open and youth men's divisions, to pick national teams to compete in this year's Asian Futsal Cup.

The ACT Cobras and NSW Thunder drew the opening game of the tournament 1-1 at AIS Arena.

The Cobras are the reigning champions in the Open men's division, if they win again they will have a chance to play in the new Asian champions league for futsal. The champions league will include the 10 best futsal club or state teams from 10 different Asian nations.

Most of the 1200 players involved in the 30th year of the futsal championships packed into AIS Arena for yesterday's opening ceremony.

Divisions from under-11s through to open men and women continue today with finals on Saturday.

TODAY

The 2009 national futsal championships, day two, in Canberra from 8.30am to 9pm at various venues. Details at www.futsalnationals.com.au.

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By : Merryn Sherwood

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