



ABU DHABI HARLEQUINS RUGBY CLUB



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NBAD Abu Dhabi Harlequins crowned Arabian Gulf Premiership champions

Night of high drama sees Quins add league title to Super 5 success

The Al Ghazal home ground of the NBAD Abu Dhabi Harlequins was no place for the feint hearted as the club broke a seven year title drought by clinching the 2008/09 Arabian Gulf league title on a nerve jangling Friday night.

The Harlequins needed a victory to guarantee an elusive premiership title, and they led the Dubai Hurricanes for 79 of the 80 minutes, before conceding a last-gasp try that locked the scores up at 23 points all.

There was relief as the Hurricanes conversion sailed wide, which meant the Harlequins had to endure an agonising two hour wait while the Dubai Dragons faced off against Bahrain in Doha, with the Dragons able to steal the title away from Abu Dhabi if they secured victory with a four try bonus point.

Some two hours later, the Al Ghazal home ground, packed with players and supporters, erupted with celebration, as news came through that the Dragons had won the match, but only managed to score three tries.

The league title caps off a season of tremendous success for the club, with the Senior A mens' side claiming an historic league and Super 5 double, and the womens' team also crowned Arabian Gulf champions.

"Just unbelievable," said Abu Dhabi Harlequins chairman Richard Harris, as DJs played late into the night and players and a huge gathering of supporters partied together on the pitch.

"The atmosphere tonight was like waiting for news in the delivery room of a hospital. We've worked so hard this year and it's just incredible for our club to be crowned champions, in both mens and womens Senior A divisions.

Skipper Alistair Thompson, who led from the front with another barnstorming match, cut a jubilant and relieved figure.

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"I can't imagine the heartbreak if things had not worked out for us tonight. We've played so hard all year and consistently been one of the best sides, so we're deserved league champions.

"I've never been involved in anything quite like this before, when the climax to a season has been on the knife edge. I'm really proud of the boys and the club, and thankful to our supporters and sponsors who have been behind us all season."

About Abu Dhabi Harlequins

NBAD Abu Dhabi Harlequins rugby club was established in 1969 and is a founding member of the Arabian Gulf Rugby Football Union. Also known as 'The Bats', Abu Dhabi Harlequins have more than 600 registered players, including one women's team and 500 players who make up the club's junior division. Abu Dhabi Harlequins' headquarters and homeground are based at Al Ghazal Golf Club, Abu Dhabi.

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