

THE Philippine Secondary Schools Basketball Championship (PSSBC) opened its doors to a provincial team in University of the Visayas as the Dickies Underwear Cup unfurls on December 16 at the SGS Stadium in Quezon City.

The Baby Lancers, champions of the Cebu Schools Athletic Foundation Inc. (Cesafi), becomes the first team outside Metro Manila to compete in the annual high school league where the top four teams from the UAAP and the NCAA, and three squads from the Filipino-Chinese Amateur Athletic Federation (FCAAF) see action.

Also competing are champion squads Far Eastern University, La Salle Greenhills, and Chiang Kai Shek College, along with Mapua, Letran, San Beda, University of Santo Tomas, Manila Patriotic School, Hope Christian High School, and another team which has yet to confirm its participation.

PSSBC chairman Rudy Yu of Dickies said the participation of UV is a recognition of the growing status of the league.

“As of now, nagkaroon kami ng isang bagong team from Cebu which is a good achievement for us. Ibig sabihin, nakakatawag pansin na sa larangan ng secondary basketball ang PSSBC,” said Yu in a press conference on Tuesday at the Sha Tin Courtyard Restaurant in Quezon City.

PSSBC management committee member Edster Sy said the league is also gaining recognition in the Filipino-Chinese basketball circuit.

“Natutuwa kami nung narinig namin sa Filipino-Chinese league na ‘yung laban for third place bakbakan kasi tatlo lang ang kukunin sa PSSBC. It’s one thing to motivate them na aside from getting that third place, they want to be in that circle na kasali ako sa PSSBC,” said Sy.

With the absence of last year’s champion Adamson, Chiang Kai Shek College is tipped as one of the favorites for the crown. The Blue Dragons bowed to the Baby Falcons in a thrilling finals series last year.

Teams are grouped into four and will play a round-robin tournament. The top two teams from each bracket will advance to the quarterfinals.

“Halos same lang line-up pero may mga bago kaming players na pumasok. Very competitive naman ‘yung team,” said CKSC coach Goldwin Monteverde.

Group A is composed of FEU, San Beda, and Manila Patriotic, while Group B has NU, Letran, and CKSC. UST, Mapua, and UV are in Group C, while LSGH, Hope Christian, and one team comprise Group D.

The Blue Dragons will open the tournament against Letran on December 16 at the SGS gym, before facing NU on December 17 at the CKSC gym.

The league, which will be shown on a delayed basis by Aksyon TV, runs until December 21

where the championship game will be played at the SGS gym.

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