

ASEAN Basketball League tips off

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Southeast Asia has welcomed its first professional basketball competition, the ASEAN Basketball League (ABL), which begins in October and will feature teams from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Brunei and Indonesia.

Marketing understands the ABL is currently negotiating with ESPN Star Sports (ESS) about a broadcast deal. ESS declined to confirm or deny this, as a spokesperson told Marketing: "ESS is always on the lookout for new opportunities to support local and regional sports on our channels".

Air Asia CEO Tony Fernandes, who is the chairman of the ABL, officially launched the competition in Manila yesterday.

The ABL will feature the Singapore Slingers, the Philippine Patriots, the Brunei Barracudas, the KL Dragons of Malaysia, Indonesia's Satria Muda BritAma and the Thailand Tigers.

In the ABL each team will be allowed seven locals, three from other ASEAN countries and two imported international players.

The competition will also have a salary cap, and is expected to use the tribalism factor of country versus country to help pull in crowds.

Bob Turner, managing director of the Singapore Slingers, said the Slingers will "no longer be an import team".

"We're a Singapore team. We'll be flying the Singapore flag," he said.

Previously the Slingers had played in Australia's professional basketball competition, the National Basketball League.

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