



ADM Barbarians, winners of the Corporate Social 200m Cup Final.
— KT photos by Leslie Pableo

Al Mulla eyes more honours

Skipper has been paddling for over five years

Alex Leach

An Emirati hopes to one day lead an all-UAE dragon boat racing team to glory on the world stage by stimulating local participation among his fellow compatriots here. Mohammed Al Mulla is a highly talented member of the Steelcraft Dragons team that participated in the Dubai Festival City Dragon Boat Festival at Festival Marina on Friday and Saturday.

The side's skipper, he has been paddling for over five years now and led Steelcraft to a top-eight finish at the 2010 World Championships in China.

Al Mulla then is perfectly positioned to inspire any countryman or woman coming through

“I've always wanted to have a team that always wins

Mohammed Al Mulla



Prize winners in the school/university category which saw NYU Abu Dhabi placed first, Heriot Watt 2 second and Heriot Watt 1 third

the ranks in this country, with the overall objective of eventually creating a 20-strong home-grown outfit.

“I've always wanted to have a team that always wins and, because I'm the only local guy to the UAE in my boat, I'm looking to have a group of all-local people that participates and represents the UAE one day. That's my vision,” the 22-year-old part-time, accountancy student at Zayed University said.

“I hope that I can be a leader of a local team one day, build a good

team and get the gold medal in the World Championships, which is really difficult.

“It will take time, but it's really improving. Every year, dragon boat racing is improving in the UAE. There are more schools and teams, with different nationalities, coming into the sport.

“It's expanding in Dubai, which is a good sign. There's a good future for dragon boat racing here.”

Al Mulla's long-standing involvement in the sport stems back to a meeting with the technical director of the UAE Dragon Boat



Mohammed Al Mulla

Association, Jason Mackenzie, and they're now team-mates on the Steelcraft boat. However, Mackenzie insists Al Mulla's selection is based purely on merit alone, with no notion of national 'tokenism' involved whatsoever.

“Mohammed is the first Emirati to really embrace the training regime and – as a result – he's legit,” Mackenzie explained.

“He's not a token Emirati – he's a real deal. I have a local development mandate and I do my very best with it, but I won't put any locals in any of my Premier crews

RESULTS

> Premier Mixed Overall Championships

1. Steel Craft; 2. Abu Dhabi MAR Barbarians; 3. Dubai Diggers

> Premier Open 200m

1. Dubai Flying Dragons; 2. Shangri-La Qaryat Al Beri; 3. Abu Dhabi MAR Barbarians

> Premier Women 500m

1. Dubai Diggers; 2. Dubai Flying Dragons; 3. Abu Dhabi Ladies

> Corporate Shield 200m Final

1. Dubizzle Rock Stars

> Corporate Bowl 200m Final

1. Al Bandar; 2. Festive Dragons; 3. Royal Orchid Hospitality

> Corporate Plate Final 200m

1. Fairmont Bab Al Bahr; 2. Shangri-La Qaryat Al Beri; 3. Daman Dragons

> Corporate Cup Final 200m

1. Abu Dhabi MAR Barbarians; 2. Fitness Firsters; 3. Steel Dragons

unless they deserve it. So, when I bring guys like Mohammed to the World Championships, it's not because he's Emirati. It's because he's one of the best guys in this region in the world and he knows that. He wouldn't want to go with us and be a big part of that if he thought he was just there because of his nationality. I hope that he is a role model.”

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