

Bangkok Sevens at Police Stadium next month

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» One of the most eagerly awaited events on the local sporting calendar is the annual Bangkok International Rugby Sevens Tournament and it's just around the corner.

Now in its 17th edition, this year's event will take place Oct 28-30 at the Police Stadium.

Organising the event as usual is Col David Dufall who is looking forward to what promises to be one of the best tournaments ever.

"It provides an opportunity for international and Thai players to compete at a higher level that otherwise is available in Thailand," says Dufall.

Once again the tournament has attracted strong teams from many nations, including defending champions Grammar Carlton from New Zealand who have won the event on the last three occasions.

Grammar Carlton will be keen

to add a fourth trophy to their collection this year, but there are plenty of teams out to stop them.

Another Kiwi team that has always performed well in Bangkok are the Pacific Warriors, a combination of players from the Auckland area. They reached the semi-finals last year and will be determined to go one better this time around.

The biggest overseas representation will be from Australia with at least four clubs represented,

Leading the challenge will be the Sunnybank Dragons from Brisbane, home club of several Queensland Reds Super 15 squad as well as a number of Wallabies over the years.

Another team familiar to fans in Thailand are the Lloyd McDermott RDT, the Aboriginal side that have played in every Bangkok Sevens since 2005.

Other Australian teams include

Outlaw 7s and Nari Nari Magpies, another indigenous side from New South Wales.

Representing South Africa will be Macassar who won the Plate competition last year and will be represented by two teams this time around.

Other international teams include Air France, Saigon Geckos, Singapore CC and Olimp, consisting of many Kazakhstan national players.

There will be a strong local representation, of course, led by the redoubtable Bangkok Bangers and the always popular Bangkok Japanese who have played in 11 editions of the tournament.

One of the strongest local sides will be the fast-running Royal Thai Police while the provinces will be represented by Mahasarakham University and Chiang Mai Suas.

The Women's Division also has an international flavour with teams

from Kazakhstan and Singapore taking on Thailand's representatives.

Among several Thai teams taking part in the women's event are Bangkok IPE who have a proud record, having been runners-up four times.

Running concurrently with the Sevens will be the Rugby Challenge for Under 16 boys and girls. This event always provides spirited competition with the youngsters displaying great passion for the game.

Col Dufall is very enthusiastic about encouraging youngsters to take up the game. He sees it as "a great way to develop and build personal confidence, leadership and teamwork."

There is still a month to go, but you can be sure that all the teams from the kids up to the top sides, are already gearing up for a great festival of rugby.