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## **NBL SEASON TO TIP-OFF SEPTEMBER 24**

**This article is courtesy of Marc Howard, Basketball Australia**

The schedule for the 2009/10 National Basketball League (NBL) season has been released, with the eight-team competition set to tip-off on Thursday September 24.

The opening game of the season will see title hopefuls the New Zealand Breakers host the resurgent Cairns Taipans at the North Shore Events Centre.

Wollongong fans won't have to wait long to celebrate their emotional return to the court after what was thought to have been their last match ever last season. They host the Perth Wildcats on Friday 25 September.

Other opening round match-ups see a Queensland local derby at the Gold Coast Convention Centre between Gold Coast and Townsville on Friday 25 September and Cairns hosting Adelaide on Saturday 26 September.

The Melbourne Tigers, who only recently announced their intention to play in the competition, will line-up for their first game of the season and home opener on Wednesday 30 September at 'The Cage' (State Netball Hockey Centre).

The season will conclude on St. Valentine's Day (14 February) with a clash between last season's Quarter Finals opponents Perth and Townsville at Challenge Stadium which will doubtless see no love lost.

Another highlight of the fixture is the first 'Reptile Rumble' clash between Far North Queensland rivals Cairns and Townsville on 11 November and the opening match of the four-game series between traditional enemies Perth and Adelaide on 17 October.

Basketball Australia Chief Executive Officer Larry Sengstock praised the eight teams for working so quickly to complete the fixture.

"Compiling a fixture is always a difficult process, but the eight clubs have worked closely with our office and at a feverish pace to produce a strong schedule for 2009/10 which we are all very pleased with," said Sengstock. "This rapid turnaround of the fixture following the exciting events of last week



means clubs now have reasonable lead times to sell their season ticket packages and promote their home games, which should help attract strong crowds. Whilst there is still plenty of work to be done before tip-off on September 24, we can now start to swing the focus back to where it should be - on our on-court product, which is truly world class."

There are 20 rounds in the 2009/10 competition, with each team playing 28 home games (14-home, 14-away) while facing each other four times. The top four teams at the end of the regular season will advance to the 2010 NBL Finals.

The revised system of play for the post-season will see the number one ranked team playing the fourth seed and number three playing number two in a pair of best-of-three Semi-Finals series. The winner of each Semi will then face off in the best-of-three Grand Final series.

The Semi Finals series will run between 19 – 28 February, with the Grand Final series to be scheduled between 3 – 12 March.

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