

INTERNATIONAL CUP

# United by footy, combined team comes in peace

ASHLEY BROWNE

**F**ootball's unlikeliest team is at it again, preparing for its odyssey to Australia for this year's International Cup.

The Peace Team, a combined team that features 13 Israeli and 13 Palestinian players, is again in serious training for the International Cup, which takes place in Sydney and Melbourne later this year.

## It takes courage to do what they're doing

BRETT KIRK

As part of his travels to various parts of the world to spread the football gospel and meet the teams which will be visiting Australia in August, former Sydney Swans co-captain Brett Kirk spent

three days in Israel last week to conduct training and to umpire a practice match between the Peace Team and a combined side of Australian expatriates and students spending their gap year in Israel.

The match took place on a converted rugby field outside Tel Aviv, with the expats coming back late in the match to win by four points. Australia's Ambassador to Israel, Andrea Faulkner, was among those in attendance.

But the foreign game made quite a splash in Israel and Kirk's visit even made the front page of *The Jerusalem Post*, Israel's influential and only English-language national newspaper.

"Sport, music and art are the universal languages and you don't really need to be able to communicate to be able to play the game, but it's the medium that actually brings you together and that's the wonderful thing about this," Kirk told *The Jerusalem Post* after the match.

"To think of what's happening in this country at the moment, these guys, it takes a lot of courage to do what they're doing. I'm sure they've probably got mates who don't understand why they're doing it, but the ripple effect can have a huge effect on so many people on so many other levels."

Former Hawthorn champion Robert DiPierdomenico will again coach the Peace Team and will head to Israel and the Palestinian

## Peace rules! Israeli, Palestinian footballers combine forces against Australia

By NADAV SHEMER

A different form of football was on display at Tel Aviv's Hayarkon Park on Friday morning, when a combined Israeli-Palestinian team took on a group of Aussie expats in a game of Australian rules football.

The match was the first proper hit-out for the Peres Center's "Peace Team" as they prepare to compete in the Australian Football League's International Cup later this year.

The Peace Team performed admirably, even though many of the players are still learning how to play the game, and a language barrier between Hebrew and Arabic often restricts communication between teammates.

Usually played between two teams of 18 men on an oval-shaped field larger than the average soccer pitch, Australian football requires courage, speed, strength and good hand and foot skills. It is the most popular spectator sport in Australia - national league matches draw average attendances of around 40,000 - but the sport is still limited to only cult status abroad.

The Peace Team was the brainchild of Tanya Ozisi, executive director of the Australian branch of the Peres Center, and James Demetriou, chair of non-



FORMER AUSTRALIAN rules football champion Brett Kirk (center, back row, in light-blue shirt) and Australian Ambassador to Israel, Andrea Faulkner (in front of Kirk) pose with members of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Team and a group of Australian expatriates in Tel Aviv on Friday. (Courtesy)

profit Sports Without Borders and the brother of AFL chief executive Andrew Demetriou. Together, they came up with the idea a few years ago of using Australian rules football to create bridges between young Israelis and Palestinians.

Like the first joint team that competed in the International Cup in 2008, the squad is comprised of equal numbers of Israelis and Palestinians, and its members include athletes with backgrounds in basketball, soccer and other sports.

Friday's game was umpired by former champion footballer and now International Cup ambassador Brett Kirk. Despite the

result - the expats snatched victory in the dying stages of the match - Kirk said that he saw enough from the combined team to prove that the sport can play a positive role in bringing together people on both sides of the conflict.

"Sport, music and art are universal languages and you don't really need to communicate to be able to play the game. But it's that actually brings you together and that's the wonderful thing about this," *Jerusalem Post* editor Tanya Ozisi said.

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what they're doing. I'm sure they've probably got mates who don't understand why they're doing it, but the ripple effect can have a huge effect on so many people on so many other levels."

Kirk, a practicing Buddhist, was known as one of the toughest players in the AFL in a decorated 12-year career with the Sydney Swans, during which he captained the team for five seasons and played in its 2005 premiership-winning team.

He said there was a groundswell of support for the Peace Team when it competed in Australia last time - even though they lost most of their games - and added that he has no doubt the team will again attract its fair share of public attention when it takes on the world's best in Melbourne and Sydney this August.

**HEADLINE NEWS:** Israeli and Palestinian footballers joining forces was front-page news in *The Jerusalem Post* last week.

territories next month to step up preparations for the team's trip to Australia. Henry Jolson QC, a board member at the Western Bulldogs, is the Peace Team ambassador and will be joining DiPierdomenico next month, along with team sponsors, which include Visy, CBA and Intergrated and members of the media.

The International Cup starts in Sydney on August 12 and moves to Melbourne for the last few days, with the final to be played

at the MCG on August 27 as a curtain-raiser to the Hawthorn-Western Bulldogs clash.

This will be the fourth International Cup and the first to include a women's competition. Teams from 24 nations are expected to take part. **R**



## Umps advised to take wait-and-see approach

» The AFL last week clarified the application of the advantage rule after an admission that a decision involving Magpie Scott Pendlebury during the round eight Geelong-Collingwood match at the MCG was incorrect.

The AFL said the umpire blew time-on too quickly and did not allow Pendlebury to take advantage of a free kick to teammate Cameron Wood.

The AFL's umpires' manager Jeff Gieschen said the senior umpires had again gone

through the revised 2011 advantage law (it is up to the player to determine if he wants advantage or not) at training last week.

"The umpires have been told to wait and observe whether a member of the infringed player's team elects to either stop immediately upon hearing the whistle to indicate he does not wish to play on, or continue to play in a manner which indicates he is taking the advantage," Gieschen said.

Gieschen said the umpires have been instructed to communicate in the following manner:

- » Blow the whistle to indicate a free kick has been awarded.
- » Communicate which team is to receive the free kick, e.g. "Free kick, Collingwood".
- » If a player from that team doesn't stop or signal he doesn't want to take the advantage, the umpire will follow up by calling "Advantage. Advantage," and also indicate this by waving his arm.
- » If the player from that team elects not to take advantage by immediately stopping or signalling to indicate he wishes

not to take advantage, the umpire will ensure the ball is returned to the original recipient of the free kick.

- » The umpire may then, if time permits, clarify the reason for the free kick. **R**

