100 Days to Go

AFC Asian Cup Australia 2015 is the centre piece of the biggest summer in Australian football history and celebrated the tournament’s “100 days to go” milestone on Wednesday 1 October.

A Gala Luncheon in Sydney was attended by football dignitaries including AFC Asian Cup Chairman Frank Lowy and Socceroos Coach Ange Postecoglou.

Asian Cup local football Ambassadors, including Socceroos great Brett Emerton, former AFC Asian Cup winner and recently recalled Iraqi national team player Ali Abbas of Sydney FC and a host of football media luminaries and business leaders were on hand.

The Asian Cup Trophy itself, meanwhile, started its global tour in China, the launching pad for a journey that will take it around Asia before arriving in Australia on 2 December.

The Asian Cup's Ambassadors made appearances for media around the country, featuring our new inflatable footballs. It is hard to top the stunning Sydney Harbour backdrop, which was the showpiece for three of our female football Ambassadors Kyah Simon, Ellyse Perry and Sarah Walsh.
Floriade

Two of Canberra’s leading female football identities – former Matildas midfielder Sally Shipard and SBS television presenter Lucy Zelic – were at Floriade in Canberra to promote “100 days to go”.

Shipard joined Kyah Simon, Ellyse Perry and Sarah Walsh as our female football Ambassadors.

The Asian Cup had a popular display at Canberra’s annual flower show, attracting good crowds.

Official Ball Launched

The AFC Asian Cup will showcase Nike’s newest addition to its footballing family with the new Nike Ordem 2, named the official match ball of the competition.

The ball was also unveiled at the “100 Days to go” lunch.

After 18 months of development, Nike officials outlined three key areas of the game, which would make this ball perfect for the modern game.

“When we came about designing the ball, we took three key elements into consideration. Firstly touch, second visibility and thirdly the flight of the ball,” Nike said.

“Look back 10 years, those balls have come a long way. 10 years ago the balls were leather and super heavy. Now, it is lightweight and it goes right in, it flies right in (the goal).

“To sum it up: player’s favourite tool, goal keeper’s enemy.”
More Ambassadors Announced

Socceroos greats Harry Kewell, Alan Davidson and Ned Zelic have joined the team as Asian Cup Ambassadors.

Kewell, Australia’s top scorer at Asian Cup finals with four goals, said the 2015 edition promised to be the event of a lifetime for Australian football fans.

“I’m looking forward to a football celebration like we’ve never seen before.

“I will be a very proud Aussie when the anthems are played at the opening match between the Socceroos and Kuwait in Melbourne on 9 January,” said Kewell, who played in Australia’s first Asian Cup in 2007 and again in the 2011 campaign when the Socceroos went all the way to the final only to be defeated 1-0 by Japan.

“What a fabulous achievement it would be if the current Socceroos can go one better and win on Australian soil for the very first time.

“I’ll certainly be in the stands cheering them on every step of the way.”
Davidson, one of Australia’s most capped defenders with 79 appearances between 1980-91, said Melburnians could look forward to a feast of football in January.

Zelic has been appointed a special Canberra football Ambassador and will help promote the event, particularly in the national capital, where he grew up and played junior football.

"The Asian Cup will be an historic milestone in the astonishing development of football in Australia and Canberra will play a significant part in it," said Zelic, whose towering performances in midfield were a hallmark of Socceroos teams in the 1990s.

“I’m proud to see that two of the 16 competing nations, Qatar and Oman, have chosen Canberra as their pre-competition base."

Kewell, Davidson and Zelic join a stellar team of Asian Cup football Ambassadors, including Sydney-based Brett Emerton, Paul Okon, Rale Rasic and Ali Abbas and Queenslanders Matt McKay and Craig Moore.

Media Squads

Asian Cup Ambassadors and Socceroos legends Mark Bosnich, Craig Moore and Alan Davidson joined members of the media in Melbourne and Sydney in two social football matches to help promote the upcoming tournament.

The trio showed they had not lost their touch, with Moore nailing the key highlight, chipping in from halfway at Melbourne’s AAMI Park to lead his and Davidson’s team to a resounding victory over Bosnich’s charges. The Sydney match was played at McKay Oval, Centennial Park where Bosnich’s team was much more competitive, but a remarkable Tim Cahill-like volley from Moore broke their hearts!!

Radio, newspaper, television, magazine and online media representatives from sport, news, entertainment and other areas played in the “friendly” fixtures against each other and enjoyed the opportunity to test their skills against the legends.
ABC to Screen Asian Cup

ABC Television is the “Official Free to Air Broadcaster” and will screen major matches of the Asian Cup, after signing an agreement with national rights holder FOX SPORTS.

FOX SPORTS will screen all 32 matches exclusively live in HD throughout Australia. The agreement with FOX SPORTS allows ABC1 to screen:

- the three group matches involving host nation Australia - against Kuwait in Melbourne on 9 January, Oman in Sydney on 13 January and South Korea in Brisbane on 17 January - on two hour delay
- any match involving Australia from the quarter final stage live
- the semi-finals and final live

ABC1 will also screen a daily half-hour highlights package at 10pm.

ABC Radio is also the official Australian radio broadcaster of the AFC Asian Cup.

The LOC congratulates FOX SPORTS and the ABC for reaching this landmark agreement.

FOX SPORTS has been a huge supporter and partner of football in Australia for the past 10 years and as the momentum of football has grown, FOX SPORTS has worked with us and made a decision in good faith to allow the ABC to broadcast parts of the Asian Cup this summer.

We thank FOX SPORTS for their continued support and vision in allowing a new audience to experience this monumental event. This agreement will create an even bigger audience for a once-in-a-generation event that will put Australia firmly in the Asian and indeed global spotlight.

It means Australians will be able to watch the key matches live or on delay on their national broadcaster, as well as enjoying the fabulous live coverage on FOX SPORTS. In addition to the free-to-air rights to the Asian Cup, ABC TV will broadcast the international match between the Socceroos and Japan in Osaka on 18 November.

AFC Boss Visits Sydney

AFC Deputy General Secretary Dato’ Windsor John delivered an inspiring speech to the Local Organising Committee during a visit to Sydney, ahead of the first leg of the Asian Champions League Final.
Dato’ Windsor urged staff to do everything possible to make the 2015 AFC Asian Cup the best edition of the tournament yet.

Having been closely involved with both the 2010 and 2014 World Cups, along with numerous AFC tournaments, Windsor John believes the 16th edition of Asia’s showpiece football event is well on its way to being an unrivalled success.

He was also extremely positive about the interest that is continuing to grow around the 2015 Asian Cup in Australia, throughout Asia and the rest of the football world.

**Team Workshop**

AFC Vice President, His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Ibni Sultan Ahmad Shah, wished AFC Asian Cup Australia 2015 participating nations the very best as they prepared for the tournament with a two-day Team Workshop.

The event was attended by team managers, doctors and officials from the 16 participating nations in Kuala Lumpur in October.

HRH Prince Abdullah, who is Chairman of the AFC Asian Cup 2015 Organising Committee, said the purpose of the workshop was to familiarise teams with the event.

*“Australia is our new brother since they joined us in 2006. Their hosting of this high-profile competition is an endorsement of Australia being part of Asia.”*

*“At the recently concluded FIFA World Cup 2014 in Brazil, we saw Australia showcase their game and also the beautiful goal by Tim Cahill. This is certainly an eye opener for Australia.”*

*“I would also like to commend the efforts by the Australian Local Organising Committee for a job well done. I am happy to note the great interest in our competition from the people of Australia, the government and multinational corporations.”*
“I have been told the response has been very encouraging, so we have to put on a good show.

“I would like to wish all the teams the very best and I hope you will have good preparations for the football festival.”

**Hunter Roadshow**

Les Murray, Phil Moss, Michael Bridges and Lawrie McKinna were among the football and civic dignitaries who featured in an Asian Cup three day roadshow through the NSW Hunter Valley.

Murray, the SBS football veteran and Asian Cup media Ambassador, was on hand when the roadshow passed through Cessnock and Singleton on a tour that also included Newcastle, Port Stephens, Lake Macquarie, Maitland and Gosford.

The friendly, football-fuelled rivalry between Newcastle and Gosford ramped up following a Mayoral Challenge at Newcastle City Hall.

Gosford Mayor and former Central Coast Mariners Coach, Lawrie McKinna and Newcastles Deputy Mayor Brad Luke drew lots, which pitted Gosford behind Oman and Newcastle flying the flag for Kuwait in one of the four Asian Cup matches to be staged at Newcastle.

“Both teams have some amazing players and the game is a fantastic draw,” said Cr Luke.

Newcastle will also host Japan v Palestine, one semi-final and the play-off for third.

Maitland Mayor, Peter Blackmore, provided a Civic welcome along with Hunter MP Joel Fitzgibbon.

Australian women’s representative and Newcastle Jets W-League striker, Tara Andrews, was part of proceedings, along with Maitland sports person of the year Maddi Elliott.

“We are starting to get into the euphoria of it all,” said Cr Blackmore.

Current Mariners A-League coach Phil Moss joined the roadshow at Gosford Stadium and former Jets player and current Emerging Jets Coach Michael Bridges appeared at Newcastle.

The tour also included Hunter Sports High in Lake Macquarie.
Pre-competition Camps

Reigning champions Japan have chosen Cessnock as their base to plot the defence of their AFC Asian Cup title in January.

The Samurai Blue, who broke Australian hearts with an extra-time winner in the 2011 final, will prepare in the Hunter Valley ahead of their opening match in Newcastle on 12 January.

Japan, featuring World Cup star Keisuke Honda, will meet newcomers Palestine in their first match before travelling to Brisbane to play 2007 champions Iraq on 16 January and Melbourne to take on Jordan on 20 January.

Honda and fellow European-based guns such as Yuto Nagatomo, Shinji Kagawa and Shinji Okazaki, will arrive in Cessnock on 3 January, training at Cessnock Sports Ground.

This will give them nine days to get ready for the 2015 Asian Cup, the biggest football tournament ever held in Australia.

Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates will call Gold Coast home as they prepare.

Swapping one sunny climate for another, the UAE should feel right at home as they set up their pre-competition camp at the height of a Queensland summer.

The Emirates team will be based at Royal Pines on the Gold Coast from 23 December, allowing more than two weeks to prepare.

Gold Coast Mayor Tom Tate (pictured above, at the announcement with Michael Brown) said he was delighted at securing the UAE team for the training camp.

"Not only is the presence of an overseas sporting team beneficial to the local economy, it is also a huge plus in promoting the city to potential visitors from that country," he said.

They follow the lead of China, who will set up at Campbelltown in Sydney's west, Bahrain (Ballarat), Jordan (Mulgrave in Melbourne's east) and Oman and Qatar (both Canberra).

Uzbekistan have also confirmed they will arrive on 3 January and train initially at Rockdale in Sydney's south.
Asian Community Cups

Melbourne's best Asian community football teams, will do battle over the next two months in the second Melbourne Asian Community Cup to be held at the Darebin International Sports Centre.

Teams representing Asian Football Confederation countries and guest nations will compete to become the Melbourne Asian Cup champion with reigning champions Iraq keen to defend their title.

The teams competing are Afghanistan, Australia, Burma, China, East Timor, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Zambia.

The event is organised by the Melbourne Chinese Soccer Association with support from Melbourne Victory, Football Federation Victoria (FFV) and the Local Organising Committee of AFC Asian Cup Australia 2015.

The grand finalists will play off at Etihad Stadium ahead of Melbourne Victory’s clash with Sydney FC on 13 December.

Ken Lam, President of the Melbourne Chinese Soccer Association said "Melbourne Chinese Soccer Association is again delighted to partner with Melbourne Victory, Football Federation Victoria and the AFC Asian Cup 2015 to deliver this significant annual event for Melbourne’s diverse multicultural community.

"In 2013, we saw 16 teams compete in a unique sporting event that provides the opportunity for local amateur football players to display their talents on the pitch.

“Great football was played, friendships were formed and all participants entered into the spirit of the tournament. This year, we look forward to more great football and even greater success off the pitch" Mr Lam added.
Arab Australia Cup

Following the success of the Asian Community Cups held in both Melbourne and Sydney earlier this year, more than 500 footballers from Sydney’s Arab communities have come together in Bankstown for the Arab Australia Cup.

The competition brought together teams representing countries from across the Arab world at both junior and senior levels, with Lebanon defeating Iraq 5-1 in the final of the open Men’s competition to take out the major prize.

Chairman of the Australian Lebanese Football Association and AFC Asian Cup Australia 2015 Community Ambassador Remy Wehbe said the tournament would build anticipation for the 2015 Asian Cup.

“This tournament connects all the various local communities and gets people ready for the Asian Cup in January,” Mr Wehbe said.

The tournament was supported by the Australian Government’s Council for Australian-Arab Relations.

Council for Arab Australia Relations

The LOC recently held a function for Arab Australian businesses with the support of the Council for Arab Australia relations.

The business function, at the first leg of the Western Sydney Wanderers v Al Hilal AFC Champions League final, was a chance to engage with Arab Australian business leaders and discuss the opportunity to use football for business and diplomacy.
Education Program

The Asian Cup’s Education Program has to date 363 schools and 52,508 children being taught the resource.

The LOC continues to encourage educators to take up the program, which is a free online resource. Sign up at www.afcasiancup.com/education

With legacy in mind, LOC has provided the details of the teachers using the resource to A-League Clubs and Member Federations to allow them to engage with the schools in their areas.

The LOC was recently involved in Sydney Olympic Park’s Education Program - Virtual SportsFest.

This saw schools run “virtual excursions” to connect students and teachers with sports education resources, sports knowledge and other opportunities for kids to get active.

Four International Sessions saw Australian schools connect with schools in Asia to talk about the Asian Cup. Schools from Korea and Melbourne were linked via video and shared their stories.

Thank You

On behalf of the Local Organising Committee, I want to thank, our many stakeholders and supporters, including the host jurisdictions’ governments and the commonwealth government.

There are only 61 days to go, the countdown is most certainly on! Thank you for your continued support and if you think there is an avenue we have not yet explored, please do not hesitate to contact me.

We know that you will all get behind this incredible opportunity to showcase not only football, but Australia to the world.

Please continue to encourage all your friends to support the Asian Cup by attending a game in their city.

Michael Brown
CEO
Local Organising Committee
AFC Asian Cup Australia 2015