

# Out and about with...

## Samantha Blackstone

**Operations Co-ordinator, Olympic Games Football, Sport and Recreation Victoria, Department of State Development**

*Interviewed by Marisa Patitucci*

*Former lawyer Samantha Blackstone is one person whose dream – being part of Australia's forthcoming Sydney 2000 Olympic Games – has become a reality – not as a competitor but by being involved behind the scenes. Here is a snap shot of Samantha's very interesting career.*

*What does your role involve?*

I am the Operations Co-ordinator for the Olympic Games Football.

SOCOG (Sydney Organising Committee of the Olympic Games), which (for those who by now do not know about it) has the primary role in the running of the Games. It has decided to hold the preliminary Olympic football (soccer as we in Australia know it) matches in various states. In a joint venture with the State of Victoria (through Sport and Recreation Victoria) Melbourne is hosting 12 football matches (five women's and seven men's) including a quarter and semi-final at the MCG. One of the key highlights is that the first kick-off and a small scale opening ceremony at the MCG will begin the Olympic football games. This will take place 2 days before the opening of the Olympic Games program in Sydney.

My job is to co-ordinate the operations for the Olympic football matches that are to be held in Melbourne as part of the Games (organising transport, accommodation, training venues, airport and medical arrangements).

*Where are the other venues for football?*

Sydney (of course .....!), Adelaide, Canberra and Brisbane.

*Describe a typical day:*

Drafting operating plans and liaison with SOCOG on all issues. Meetings with those individuals and

organisations relevant to football operations such as venue managers, airport personnel (customs), Victoria Police (security arrangements). At the moment I am scrutinising the quality of the turf at the training venues – a certain standard of turf is expected for football training and matches. Overnight I have become a turf expert and have learnt that although grass is green on the outside it doesn't mean that it is a good playing surface!

*What are the special skills necessary for the job?*

The role requires very little legal skill (drafting quick contracts). Key criteria are excellent communication, good organisation, helpful interpersonal skills and most importantly, a very good sense of humour – especially at all those meetings.

*Most useful item in office:*

The little plastic soccer balls that the staff throw around the office for stress relief and to get the bosses attention!

*What international rules will apply to the football games? Are there any differences from the normal rules that apply to non-Olympic competitions?*

Football is governed by FIFA's (Federation of International Football Association) rules. There are no differences from the normal rules that apply to football games. To ensure that Football World Cup remains the premier football event in the football calendar, FIFA has imposed as a main requirement for the Games that only three players in each of the 16 mens football teams to be fielded can be over the age of 23 years. There is no age restrictions for women playing in the eight women's football teams.

*How did this job opportunity arise?*

After leaving the law I travelled and worked overseas (teaching English in South America) for a year. On my

# Careers

return, I responded to Sport and Recreation Victoria's recruitment campaign and was lucky.

*What are your interests in football and sports generally:*

I love sports and previously participated as a netballer in the Australian team to the 1997 Maccabiah Games in Israel. The Manchester United v Australia match played at the MCG earlier this year was the first football match I ever watched though. When I was given this job opportunity, I did not mind that it was a foot- and not a net-ball, I just grasped it!

*First job:*

Articled clerkship and solicitor at a first tier Melbourne law firm.

*Career highlights:*

Graduating from a combined law/psych degree and my present job (of course!). Once the Games are over I will be in need of a good holiday – maybe a couple of months in Nepal and Africa. On my return, more job opportunities may be in the wind for me with the announcement that the Commonwealth Games will be held in Melbourne in 2006!

*Role Model:*

My parents, who have always given me the freedom and confidence to follow my dreams and to do what makes me happy.

## So you want to be an Australian Youth Ambassador...

### The Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program

In May 1998, the Australian Government announced it would allocate \$10 million over the next two years to fund the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program to send up to 500 young Australians abroad.

The Program identifies and places skilled young Australians, aged 18-30, on development assignments throughout the Asia Pacific region. It gives them the opportunity to use their skills to assist developing countries, while building long-term goodwill and understanding between Australians and our neighbours.

The program works with Australian **Partner Organisations** including companies, educational institutions, government agencies and community organisations which have a commitment to the Asia

Pacific region. Partner Organisations may nominate their staff to become Australian Youth Ambassadors. If successful, these young Ambassadors are then sent to work with Host Organisations in the region.

A **Host Organisation** may be a government department, local business, educational or community organisation in an eligible Asia Pacific country. They propose development assignments for the Australian Youth Ambassadors. Assignments are generally of six months duration (a minimum of three and a maximum of 12 months is considered) and must meet a specific development need.

Most countries in the Asia Pacific eligible for Australian aid are also eligible for this program.