



JUNIOR FOOTBALLERS TO MEET A LEGEND

by Daniel Garb

Australia's junior football team will meet a legend of the world game on Monday with former Manchester United great Sir Bobby Charlton to be a special guest when they face off against Great Britain.

The announcement is a bonus for both the young Aussie team and the Maccabi movement with England's 1966 World Cup winning captain already confirmed as Great Britain's flagbearer at the opening ceremony.

Charlton is expected to shake the hands of both sets of players and pose for a photograph that will be a lifelong memento for a young squad that is fully aware of the reputation of the man they will encounter.

"At 72 they still know who he is, it will be amazing for the boys to meet a person of his stature in the flesh, its very exciting and they are all buzzing about it," said team manager Kevin Fisher.

And while the clash against Great Britain will provide the team with plenty to look forward to, they must first deal with Belgium in their opening match on Sunday to give themselves a sound chance of progressing through from a tough group that also includes Argentina and Brazil"

"It's an absolute must win game for us, no question," Fisher said.

FIRST TIME IN ISRAEL FOR THIS 90-YEAR-OLD SUPPORTER

by Henry Benjamin

She was born in Rangoon, moved to Singapore and then to Sydney...but Ruby Saunders has fallen in love with Israel at the age of 90.

She told Hayom: "My late husband always thought it was too dangerous but I always wanted to come."

So when Rebecca Sheridan was selected for the Women's Football team, her sports-loving grandmother seized the opportunity to bring up the quinnelle of watching Rebecca's play and acquainting herself with the land of her forefathers.

"I absolutely love Israel" she told Hayom.



Footballer Rebecca Sheridan with Mum Sally and grandmother Ruby
Photo: Henry Benjamin

AUSSIE SWIMMERS' SECRET WEAPON

by Daniel Garb

Unique bonding techniques may prove to be the much-needed catalyst for ending the long running drought in the Australian Open Swim division. The swimmers have failed to net an individual medal at the Games since 1993.

The 2009 squad boasts twenty-one competitors - the largest in Australian Maccabiah history and includes eight open team members who have adopted the nickname of the 'Budgie Smugglers'.

Armed with a range of chants, green baggy green caps and blue singlets, the renewed team has shown a spirit which may have helped save some swimmers' careers, according to head of swimming, Anthony Goodridge. Photo: Peter Haskin



The new-found confidence has spurred the swimmers on for the Games, including a couple who may have been looking at retirement .

The 'Budgie Smugglers' is the new nickname for the Open team, with Shelly Lowenstein - the sole open women's swimmer now known as 'The Budgette.'

"The Juniors want to get in on the act too...but The Smugglers is confined to the Open Team. We saw how well it inspired them in Argentina and we wanted to build on that," he said.

While it remains an intangible aspect of improving performance, Goodridge admits the squad needs to use whatever advantages they can in order to win individual medals.

"It's one of the hardest competitions at the games - you're up against the Israeli national team, the Americans have got Olympian Jason Lezak and their top five swimmers are of an extremely very high standard'

"To win an individual medal here in the open you have to be of finalist standard at the Australian titles...it's that high a standard."

The team's best hope of breaking the drought is David Schnabl who was recently a national semi-finalist in the backstroke, while they have high hopes for the Men's relay squad with seven swimmers battling it out for spots in the final team. Included are Rifkin brothers David and Daniel who are competing at their third Games and Greg Shein who won five medals in the Juniors, four years ago. The Juniors remain a different story altogether with the highly rated Marni Burger set to be ranked in the top three in five of her events, with Ashleigh Smart and Joshua Balsim also a chance to be among the medal places-getters.

The Masters team is led by former Water Polo player Jeff Sher - a veteran competing in his fifth Maccabiah Games.

PETER HASKIN SHOOT'S TRAINING



PARTY TIME



THE TEAM VISITS JERUSALEM

The 400 plus team members were bussed yesterday to Jerusalem where they visited the Kotel and Yad Veshem.

For a while, the exuberance and excitement of the Maccabiah gave way to a short period of solemnity as the delegation experienced two of the most respected icons in the Jewish world.



Top: Laying tefillin at the Wall

Bottom: An emotional George Oshlack, a Holocaust survivor team member at Yad Vashem

Photos: Peter Haskin

YOUTH BASKETBALLERS ACHIEVE STAR STATUS

by Henry Benjamin



Michael Sput watches the autograph line-up

Our Youth Basketball team attracted the attention of a group of youngsters sharing a gymnasium with them during training in Rishon.

The fifty primary school children were attending a summer school session when the Youth Basketball team arrived.

As soon as they realised that the boys were from Australia and were participating in the Maccabiah, they presented their new heroes with pen and paper for autographs. The Aussie team got something they did not bargain for...a ready made Israeli cheer squad.