



SAFE AND SOUND

FIRST WAVE ARRIVES

More than 200 athletes, including a support group of medical, physio and media teams, have now arrived safely in Israel. The remaining 200 plus members are due to land at Ben-Gurion Airport this morning.

This marks the start of a three day period when the Australian team will be together as one before heading off to individual team headquarters throughout the country.



Before a ball is kicked, hit, thrown or a leg stretched the Australian team will be briefed on a variety of topics important for their sustained safety and security in Israel.

The days ahead are crucial for teams and individuals to step up their training programs and finalise preparations.

Some teams have started training as one for the first time as members from around Australia get together to ready themselves for competition and the opportunity of winning medals at the 18th Maccabiah where they will compete against 7500 fellow Jews from around the globe. Competition starts on Sunday, July 12 with the eagerly-awaited Opening Ceremony on Monday evening.

SHOOTING STAR

Women's footballer Lani Kahn has been chosen to be the Australian face of the Maccabiah Games in a revealing documentary to be aired on Israeli television. The 20 year old Victorian will have her entire experience in Israel captured on video to be broadcast nationally on local station Channel Ten.

Negotiations are also underway to have the film shown back home on SBS.



Lani Kahn [headband] with teammates from the Australian Women's Football team

A central midfielder for the Australian women's side, Lani was asked by the station to be filmed for one day during the games and then take control of the camera herself in order to gain a unique behind the scenes insight into the Maccabiah experience.

'I'm really shocked to have been asked to do this', she said.

'But I'm also really excited. It'll be a great experience to document the different dimensions of the games both on and off the field.

'It'll be an uncensored insight into the life of an athlete and also my team but obviously it'll have to be kept clean.'

In what might be seen by some as a daunting challenge that could place a burden on their focus, Lani believes the video will actually be of benefit for the women's side.

'I think it's a great way to bring the girls even closer together.'

'We've trained really hard together for a long time now so we know each other really well, there's some real jokers in the side and it will be good fun to reveal that.

'I'm really happy that it was our team that was chosen,' she said.

It's a common saying that the Maccabiah experience is one to be remembered for a lifetime, in this case the saying has never sounded so true.

'Now I'll have something to be able to show my friends first hand and watch over and over...it'll be great to keep forever.'

ONE WAY TICKET FOR DARA

For 27-yr-old Dara Podjarski, there is no return portion on her airline ticket....the Sydney-born footballer is not coming home after the Maccabiah.

The reality for Dara will be that she will already be home when the last flag is furled at the closing ceremony. She has followed her dream to move from Australia to Israel where she has now made Aliyah.

Dara told Hayom that she had set her sights on making Israel her home last year and plans to return to studying after learning Ivrit at Ulpan.

The former Mt Sinai and Sydney Girls High student has had a strong background in community affairs, including involvement with youth movement Hineni and has worked for the State Zionist Council. Asked what would happen to her football career in Israel, Dara said: "If I can't find a team to play for, I will start one."

Maccabi wishes Dara a successful future in Israel.



RUGBY BOYS TOUCHING DOWN IN ISRAEL



Hockey girls Mikki Hofbauer [l] and Nikki Sonenberg wearing the team's off-field uniforms....opponents beware!