



BRIDGE VICTIMS REMEMBERED

by Henry Benjamin

More than 400 members of the Australian delegation to the 18th Maccabiah in Israel crossed the still poisoned waters of the Yarkon river to attend a memorial service in honour of the four athletes who lost their lives in 1997.

As the line, headed by Australia's ambassador to Israel, James Larson and NSW State Member of Parliament Peter Debnam, solemnly marched across the permanent bridge eight abreast, Israeli girl guides and scouts stood by the sides handing each athlete a single flower.

That flower was gently laid at the foot of the memorial to Elizabeth Sawicki, Yetti Bennett, Greg Small and Warren Zines alongside a wreath bearing the words "from the Government and people of Australia" laid by the ambassador.

An Australian United Israel Appeal Study Mission joined the athletes in watching Greg Small's wife Suzanne and her children Josh and Rebecca cling together in front of the black monument now draped with the Australian flag.

As the melancholy tones of a flute wafted through the searing heat, the Smalls took their place in the front row to listen to speeches and prayers and Kaddish followed from various dignitaries including the Ambassador and the President of Maccabi Australia, Harry Procel. Ambassador Larsen said: "If there is a lesson from this tragedy surely it's the willingness of those Australians who were involved to come together and to remember those who unnecessarily died or were injured and to show a willingness to change the future.

Maccabiah Management member, Michelle Tremiglozzi, representing her brother-in-law whose mother, Elizabeth Sawicki died in the 1997 tragedy was next to speak followed by Tom Goldman, the Head of Delegation. Goldman said: "We will never forget the passing of Greg, Yetti, Elizabeth and Warren. We continue to honour their memory by participating in the Maccabiah here in Israel, which is a true celebration of Jewish life"

As eyes welled with tears, the emotional service was next to hear from Josh Small, the 19-yr-old son of victim Greg, wearing his father's team shirt from 1997. Josh is in Israel with his mother Suzanne and sister Rebecca and will compete in his late father's sport, Ten Pin Bowling.

Josh's speech is reproduced here in full:

TWELVE YEARS AGO...AT THIS PLACE, FATE DEALT OUR FAMILY THE CRUELEST OF LIFE'S BLOWS.

MY BELOVED DAD, GREG SMALL, LOST HIS LIFE IN THIS PLACE.

MY DAD HAD COME HERE TO TAKE TO THE HIGHEST LEVEL WITHIN JEWISH SPORT HIS PASSION FOR TEN PIN BOWLING.

LOVED AND RESPECTED AS A HUMAN BEING AS WELL AS A HIGHLY TALENTED BOWLER BY ALL WHO KNEW HIM, DAD WAS BURSTING WITH PRIDE AND ENTHUSIASM AT HAVING BEEN SELECTED FOR THE AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION TO THE 15TH MACCABIAH IN 1997.

HE HAD PRACTICED AND TRAINED HARD AND WAS READY TO TAKE ON THE JEWISH WORLD'S BEST BOWLERS HERE IN ISRAEL.

THE TEN PIN BOWLING COMPETITION STARTED ON THE DAY BEFORE THE OPENING CEREMONY SO HE CERTAINLY GOT TO REALISE HIS DREAM OF COMPETING IN 1997...BUT HIS COMPETITION WAS TO BE TRAGICALLY CUT SHORT.

A FEW WORDS TO MY BELOVED FATHER

DAD

IT IS NOW 2009 AND YOUR SEVEN-YEAR-OLD SON IS NOW 19.

WE ARE FAST APPROACHING THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 18TH MACCABIAH.

I AM HERE...IN THIS PLACE...AT THIS TIME...AND I WILL FINISH OFF WHAT YOU STARTED ALL THOSE YEARS AGO...AND I WILL DO MY BEST TO WIN YOUR PRIDE...AND MAYBE A MEDAL...FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT NOT EVEN A TRAGEDY OF MONSTER PROPORTIONS CAN BREAK THE BOND THAT WILL FOREVER EXIST BETWEEN US.

YOU MAY HAVE BEEN SMALL BY NAME...BUT YOU REMAIN A GIANT IN STATURE. I AM GRATEFUL TO ALL OF YOU HERE TODAY FOR GIVING OF YOUR TIME AND YOUR THOUGHTS AT THIS MEMORIAL WHICH ENSURES THAT MY DAD'S MEMORY ALONE WITH THAT OF ELIZABETH, WARREN AND YETTI REMAINS ETERNAL...

The crowd stood silently as the Small family clutched each other and slowly dispersed as the service drew to its close.

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FOOTBALLERS KEEN TO SEIZE CHANCE

by Daniel Garb

The moment of truth for Australia's men's football team comes early tomorrow morning when they take on Chile in a must win game.

Claiming all three points would put them in pole position for qualification after being granted a favourable draw which sees them play Peru in their second match.

The schedule has given the team a golden opportunity to progress through to the next round before they play the might of the USA in their final group clash.

"The game against Chile is probably the most important. If we can beat them it certainly gives us a great chance of getting through as we expect Peru to be the weakest side in the group," said captain Ryan Bloch. He added: "Based on the effort so far I think our chances of winning are good. No South American team is a pushover but I feel we have the quality to get the job done."

After working together on the training track for the past week the skipper is demanding his side seize their chance.

"I'd be extremely disappointed if we didn't get through and I'm not expecting anything less from the boys."

"We have a great group of young players who have come here to play and not drink and party like some of the football teams before them," he said.

Bloch has been joined in the leadership group by Melbourne midfielder Ari Ritz and Sydney veteran Johnny Pillemer.

IMAGES by Peter Haskin



For our full gallery of this event, please visit <http://gallery.me.com/maccabiah#100041>

AUSSIE CRICKETERS DIG DEEP IN CLASH WITH CHAMPS

Australia's cricketers face today the toughest test of their campaign in Israel - a battle with reigning gold medallists South Africa in what is one of the blue ribbon matches on the Maccabiah calendar.

Led by former Test star Adam Bacher the South Africans are raging favourites to take home the gold medal and will be a formidable opponent for an Australian side that has just one player in their squad with previous Maccabiah experience in vice-captain Dylan Weiner.

And having been here four years ago, the West Australian says its an advantage that Australia is playing the South Africans first up.

"It'll be a great test for us to let us know where we stand," he said. "This game is not the most important. The big one for us will be against Great Britain and that should determine the final based on the last Maccabiah."

Regardless of the gulf in talent between the two teams, Weiner believes the great sense of old fashioned Aussie spirit that exists in the young side will be important.

"We may not be the most talented team in the competition on paper but the camaraderie in the camp is great and we have a very even group mixed with a few players who have experience at a very high standard."

The side includes captain and wicketkeeper Brett Rosen who plays at grade level in Sydney.

"The plan is to try and bat first and force them to tire in the heat but either way we'll battle on and with the spirit that the team has who knows what can happen," Weiner said.