

Podcast 63 – Soccer in Australia

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia, with Rob McCormack

Podcast Number 63 – Soccer in Australia

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Hi,

There is no doubt that soccer is the most popular sport in the world. It's popularity has been increasing steadily in Australia over the past fifteen years and I think the game is going from strength to strength here. In terms of audiences and television coverage, it is still behind Australia Rules Football and Rugby League but it is starting to catch up. In this podcast, I would like to talk about soccer in Australia.

Soccer was first played in Australia in 1880 so it's been here for a long time. But it was Australian Rules Football which proved to be more popular through the last century. Soccer was always popular with migrants who came from England and European countries but it never seemed to be as popular as Australian Rules Football. For instance, I grew up in the late 1950s and the 1960s in Western Australia. We never played soccer at school. It was a game that was mostly played by migrants because it was very popular in the countries where they came from. That's about all we knew about soccer. Soccer was certainly popular in the big cities where there were large migrant populations. In fact, when my wife and I were living in Sydney in the early 1990s, it was soccer that our oldest son played as his first organized sport when he was about 7 years old. I can remember our Saturdays watching him play. His coach was from England and I loved the way he taught the boys how to love the game of soccer. By 2006,

there were about 1 million children and adults playing soccer in Australia. That was more people than either of Australian Rules Football, Rugby League or Rugby Union can boast. But at that time it didn't have the profile of the other three football codes and there were fewer people watching the sport, either at the games or on television. The first national soccer competition had started in 1977, but it had never become really popular and finally ceased in 2004. It was the creation of a new national soccer competition in 2005 which saw soccer in Australia really start to take off. The new national competition is called the A-League. It has been a great success so far.

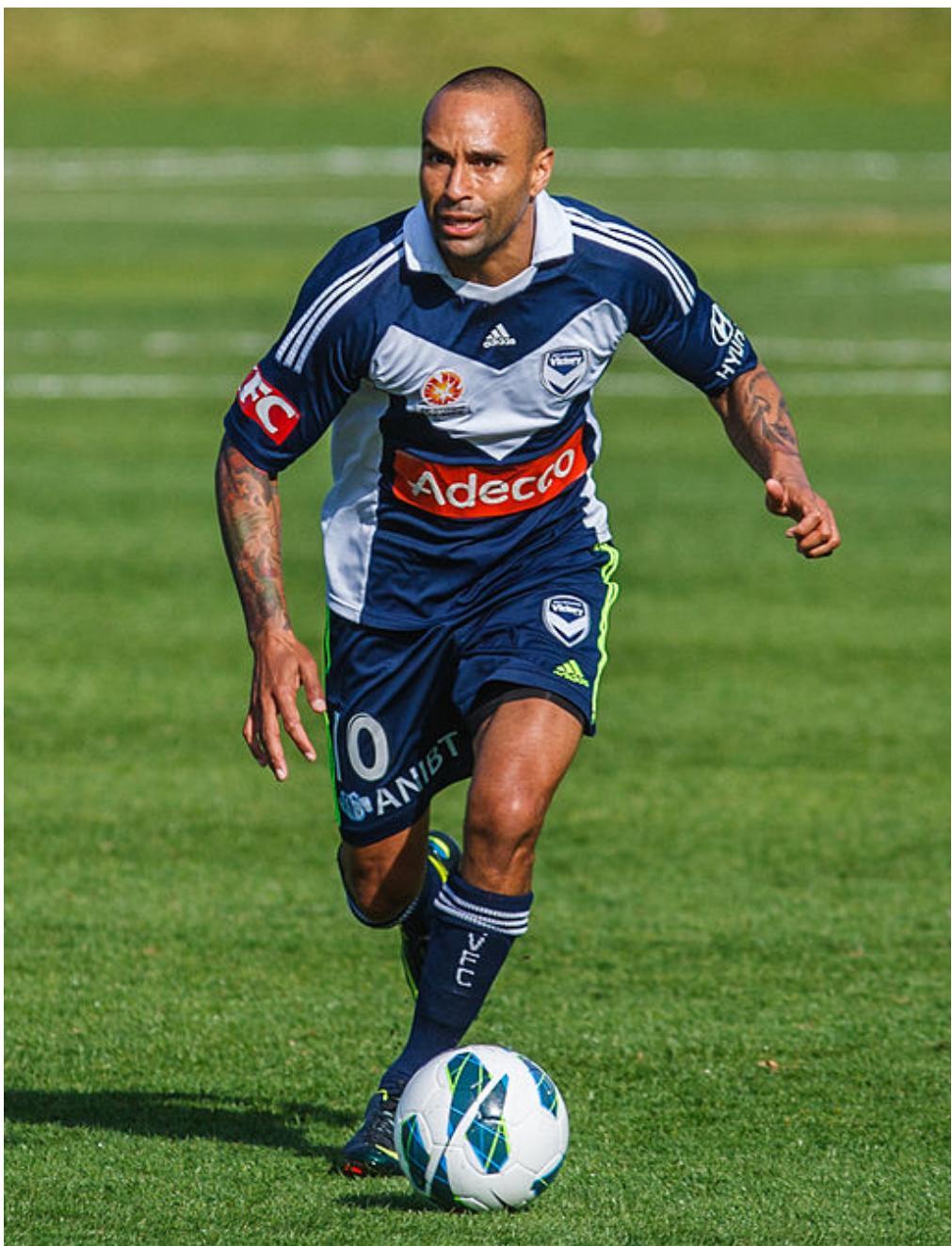


An A-League match between Newcastle Jets and Sydney FC at Newcastle Stadium, 3 November 2007.

By Joeyjeremiah kkf [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

The A-League is a national competition with 10 teams, including 9 from around Australia and 1 from New Zealand. There are two teams from each of Sydney and Melbourne and one team from each of Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth, Newcastle and the Central Coast of New South Wales. Finally, there is a team

from New Zealand, being Wellington Phoenix. The regular season games are played in the Australian summer, from October to April, when each team plays each other team 3 times. The team finishing on top of the ladder is called the A-League Premier. The top 6 teams from the A-League competition then compete in the Finals Series to find out who will be the A-League Champion for the season. The A-League Champion in 2014-15 was Melbourne Victory.



Archie Thompson playing in a pre-season game between the Central Coast Mariners and Melbourne Victory on 16/09/2012.

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The A-League Premier also gets the opportunity to compete in the AFC Champions League competition, which is a competition of the 32 best club teams from countries all around Asia. In 2014, the A-League Premiers of 2012/13, the Western Sydney Wanderers, were good enough to win the AFC Champions League competition. That was a wonderful feat, especially as the Western Sydney Wanderers only joined the A-League in 2012/13. Aside from the A-League, the other major soccer successes have been the performances of the Australian Team. Everybody calls them the Socceroos. We are most proud of the Socceroos' successes at the World Cup. They first competed in the World Cup in 1974 and then followed a long period where they were unable to qualify to play at the World Cup. That all changed in 2006. After 32 years, the Australian Team finally qualified by beating Uruguay in Sydney in front of 82,000 screaming fans. That was an amazing game. It was the second of two matches with Uruguay. Uruguay had won the first match 1 – 0, which was played in South America. So Australia had to win the second match by at least 2 goals, in order to qualify for the World Cup.



Australia playing Uruguay to qualify for the World Cup in 2005

By Adrian Furby (originally posted to Flickr as It's ON!!!!) [CC BY 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons

At the end of full time, the score was Australia 1, Uruguay 0. So the aggregate for the two games was 1 goal to each team. Next they played 30 minutes of extra time, but still the scores were locked at 1-0. That meant they had to go to a penalty shootout. I can remember watching this on TV, along with millions of other Australians. Our goal keeper was Mark Schwarzer. He somehow managed to save 2 goals in the penalty shoot out and that was enough for Australia to qualify. What a match and what excitement.

In the World Cup competition in 2006, Australia played really well and went on to finish 16th out of the 32 teams which

qualified. In their last game, they were beaten 1-0 by Italy. Italy went on to win that World Cup.

It was our great performance in that World Cup, along with the start of the A-League in Australia in 2005 which really helped soccer to become a real force in sport in Australia. We qualified for the World Cup again in 2010 and 2014. In 2015, Australia won the Asian Cup against Korea, 2 goals to 1. With wins like that, Australian soccer can only get bigger and more popular in the years to come.



Panoramic image of the Melbourne Cricket Ground during a friendly international football game between Australia and Greece on 25 May 2006.

By Charles Gregory (en:User:Chuq) (Own work) [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>), CC-BY-SA-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>) or CC BY-SA 2.5-2.0-1.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5-2.0-1.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would

like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

Podcast 63 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

Start quiz

Vocabulary

adults = people who are grown up, not children

aggregate = the total, when you add two or more things together

aside from = apart from, not including

audiences = the people who watch a performance or a game of sport, usually on television or in a theatre

Australian Rules Football = a type of football played in Australia. See podcast 2.

boast = to tell others how good you are

catch up = when one thing gets closer to another thing

century = 100 years

certainly = there is no doubt

coach = a person who teaches sports players or a sports team how to play

codes = types

competed = to play against another person or team in a sport

competition = when people or teams compete to win

coverage = the amount that is covered or reached

creation = when something is made

excitement = when people are very happy about something

feat = to achieve something, to do something special

for instance = for example

force = when you are strong

goal keeper = the player who stands in the goal to stop the ball coming in

including = to have as its parts, to be made up of

ladder = a list of all the teams in the competition, showing who has won the most games

locked = when two scores are the same and no team can win

major = very big

managed = to make something work correctly

matches = a game of sport between two teams or people

migrants = people who go to live in another country

million = 1,000,000

national = when things are at a high level, of a country or a nation

no doubt = it is a fact, no-one disagrees

opportunity = when you have a chance to do something that you can't do at another time

organized = when things are planned

penalty shootout = when a soccer game is a draw, each team has 5 shots at goal

performances = when you do something which requires a lot of skill

period = an amount of time

popular = when something is liked by a lot of people

profile = how much the public knows about someone or something

proud = when you have something which you think is very good

qualify = when you must win some games in order to keep going in the competition

regular = normal

Rugby League = a type of football played in Australia and other countries

Rugby Union = a type of football played in Australia and other countries

screaming fans = people watching the game who are shouting loudly for their team

season = a period of time which happens each year

steadily = to do something without stopping, without slowing down

strength = when you are strong

success = when things are going well

take off = when something becomes more popular