

# Victorian takes the Diamonds top coaching position

By Stuart Harrison  
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A heartstopping World Championship win to the Diamonds has not been enough to see Norma Plummer retain her place as the top coach in Australian netball.

Plummer has held the position since 2003. She will be replaced in the position by former Melbourne Phoenix coach Lisa Alexander in the lead-up to their test series against England and New Zealand next month.

Alexander is the first Diamonds coach in 20 years to have never played for Australia. Her past experience in not negligible though; she led the Phoenix to back to back Commonwealth Bank trophy wins in 2002-03 and served

as the championship-winning Adelaide Thunderbirds assistant coach in 2008. She was also a Victorian representative player and coach of the Australian under 21s squad from 2006-7.

"It's a great privilege to be the Australian Diamonds coach; I feel a great sense of responsibility to the legacy of all the icons that have come before me as coaches and players," Alexander says.

"I've been working at this for 17 years since I was the Australian apprentice coach to Joyce Brown."

Netball Australia have said that with the added responsibilities of the restructured position it was not feasible for Plummer to be coaching both the national



The Diamonds will see a change in their coach despite their World Championship win.

team and a side in the trans-tasman ANZ championship.

Netball Australia has announced that the restructure will mean the national coach will be involved in the "technical direction" of high performance programs and working with coaches involved in national and state institutes of sport and the ANZ Championship.

Plummer will retain her position with the Perth-based West Coast Fever and holds few grudges hoping the full-

time commitment to the Fever can put them on top in the upcoming season.

"I'm on record as saying that I have been champing at the bit to get more hands-on with a group of players again," Plummer says.

"The day to day coaching is what I love and my role at West Coast Fever will give me that. I have had a fantastic eight years as Diamonds coach and the highlights of two World Championships will be hard to

beat."

Current Diamonds and Melbourne Vixens star Julie Corletto first met Alexander as a 16 year old trying to make a break into the Phoenix squad and believes she has what it takes to keep Australia on top of the netball world.

"I think she'll be fantastic in this role. She had great success at Phoenix and has such a broad range of experience," Corletto says. "She's a players' coach; she gets on really well with the

players and her communication with the players and support staff is second to none."

"She always brings a fresh approach and new ideas to training and I know that she'll put in a lot of time. Her trainings are really hard; she wants us to get a lot out of them and expects a lot from us - as players we respect that. She's a very well respected coach."

# Richmond great tells of great highs and deep lows

By Stuart Harrison  
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Kevin Bartlett, better known to most as KB or Hungry, is much acclaimed as one of the greatest football players of all time. But a new book has revealed that throughout his time as player and coach of Richmond dark clouds never seemed to be too far away.

KB: *A Life in Football* is a revealing biography. After all, Kevin Bartlett has spent much of his time as an strongly opinionated media personality post-career without much talk about his own playing days.

The book was written by his son, Rhett, who has faithfully recorded the thoughts of his father on a club that has also played a large part in his own life. Rhett Bartlett was also the author of a book on the history of Richmond FC in 2007.

Bartlett won five premierships with the Tigers in his staggering 403 game career between 1965 and 1983.

He was a player born into an era when knocking on doors could get you selected for a big name football club. He started playing for Richmond as a 15 year old in the Under 17s competition and worked his way up

from there.

Bartlett credits former coach Tom Hafey for turning Richmond into a powerhouse club that could use their physical strength to lethal effect. It was an era where the "everyone is against Richmond" mentality was strong within the club, a side effect of so many great sides.

Today's young Tiger team could learn a lot from the largely inexperienced drought breaking team of 1967.

*"I respect Graeme Richmond enormously. I'm just not sure that I admired him"*

- Kevin Bartlett

But it was also an era of ruthlessness, especially in the hands of club stalwart Graeme Richmond, whose power he saw as beyond that of the club president. Richmond caught Bartlett's ire for his alleged role

in the downfall of Hafey and then, in 1991, Bartlett's own dismissal as coach.

"He was the most powerful administrator at the club. Put simply, he could end your career or he could extend your career."

"Next to Tommy, Graeme Richmond was the single biggest influence behind Richmond becoming a successful club ... I respect Graeme Richmond enormously. I'm just not sure, however, that I admired him."

As Bartlett says, "You don't become the godfather for nothing."

Kevin Bartlett's career crossed generations and saw Richmond reach the great highs of five premierships and the low of nearly seeing the club's destruction.

His game record has only been beaten by one player since - Hawthorn great Michael Tuck played his 426th game in 1991. Bartlett finds that fact amazing, considering the physical ability of modern players and the changes in the game that have limited its physical impact.

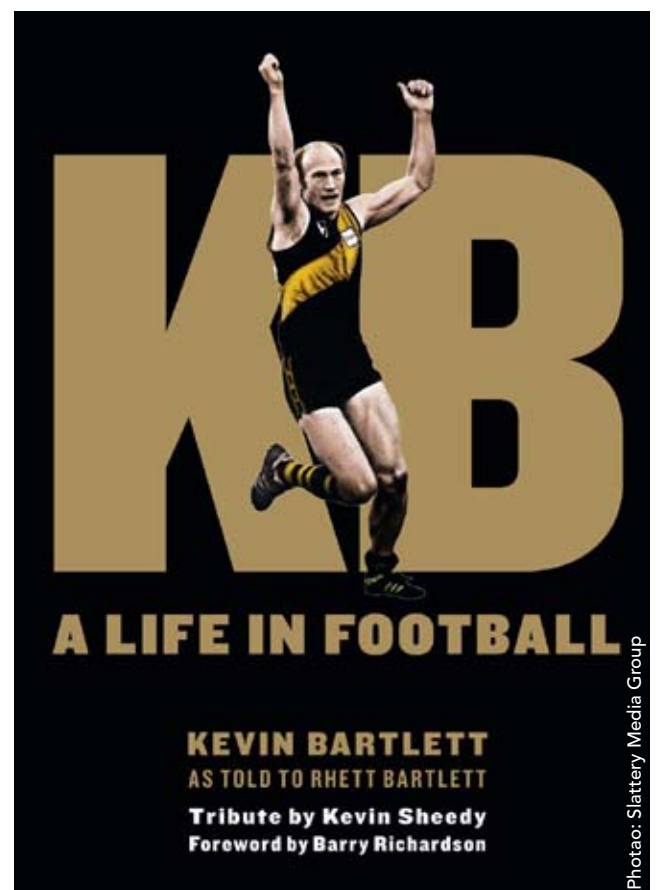
"I was pleased I got to 400 because I felt it would be a great

*"He was the most powerful administrator at the club. Put simply, he could end your career or he could extend your career."*

- Kevin Bartlett

incentive for other players to play on. There was always talk that when players got to 300 they were at the end of their career, but I didn't buy into that. I was saying that when you get into your mid-30s, if you're still enthusiastic about the game then you should continue to play. It doesn't matter if the media think your time is up. If your enthusiasm is there and you have the support of the club, then keep playing," Bartlett says.

Bartlett even returned to Richmond to coach in 1987 only to have the club announce



KB: *A Life in Football* by Kevin and Rhett Bartlett, published by Slattery Media Group, is out now.

several months later that it was severely in debt.

Despite a successful Save Our Skins campaign keeping the club in the competition, the struggles of the club persisted and Bartlett was sacked.

For Bartlett the sacking showed him the club had lost its soul, leading him to disassociate himself from it for 16 years. Even as the club inducted him into its Immortals club, Bartlett sent his son to pick up the award.

It was a "silent protest" that Bartlett now believes lasted too long despite the importance of respect that he says he was not afforded by the club he had devoted his life to.

It is a running theme in the book that while success can be great, sometimes respect is more important and no organisation deserves our unthinking obedience.

A must read for all footy fans wanting an insight into one of the great footy minds.

# Locals cheer on Cambodia at Homeless World Cup

By Stuart Harrison  
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A group of Melburnians has been cheering hard when Cambodia hits the pitch in the Homeless World Cup in Paris this past week.

The Cambodian team was set up by Happy Football Cambodia Australia (HFCA). The organisation runs a football program in Phnom Penh for disadvantaged young people who have experienced hard lives - an all too real phenomenon in a country where official statistics can hide the truth about poverty.

The program was set up in 2005 and started sending teams to the annual Homeless World Cup in 2008 when it was held in Melbourne. They work with local charities to find children that would benefit from the program.

Its initiator, Paraic Grogan, had been involved with an

education program called the Happy School but decided to also start the football program due to the importance of sport and exercise in life.

"He saw football as a way to give these kids to do something that wasn't strictly school based, or education based but was something that was more about being part of a team, understanding the concepts of teamwork and sharing, responsibility, having a bit of a goal that was fun. Happy School was fun but at the end of the day it was about learning the basics of education so this is just something that tended to be fun and more of a relaxed way of building their social skills," HFCA committee member Jon Hammond says.

Hammond says the program has grown to the point that some of the players at the 2008 Homeless World Cup are

employed by the program as coaches and administrators.

"It's really starting to bear some fruit in terms of becoming a little more self-sustainable. There's some fundraising going on over there now because there is more staff involved. More kids, more staff and there's a little bit more energy as far as them owning it themselves, rather than us running it from over here. They run a couple of fundraising events over there now and the self-employment thing we're now paying about 12 staff all together with the coaches and the junior staff. It's really come a long way. It's been a hard slog but it feels like it's really starting to achieve something great," he says.

With a growing program but only eight players in the squad, competition for places for the trip to Paris were fierce.

"This is a trip of a lifetime



Team Cambodia in Paris.

Photo: Homeless World Cup

for them. None of them would have been outside the country before let alone on a plane - let alone to a completely different developed country. So I guess there is a consideration of how they are going to cope with that. There's also a consideration of who the best players are football-wise. That is obviously a large consideration."

Hammond says the Homeless World Cup can put hope back into people that are often forgotten by the rest of society.

"It's very noticeable that these kids have come back full of confidence, full of self awareness but I guess also world awareness that there is this whole different

world out there. That this isn't the be-all and end-all and there are ways to overcome the cycle of what you've grown up with and what you think is the way and there are other people out there that are willing to give you those opportunities. Those people also want to see you grab those opportunities and make the most of them," Hammond says.

"So what we find is those kids come back and they become leaders in their groups. So they put this across to the other kids and the other kids go, wow, you're so much better for your experience. Look at you, you're great. The other kids are seeing this positive thing and they want to be a part

of it. So it's making these kids go to whatever organisation they're involved with and making them stay there and get involved because they want to play there, they want to go to the World Cup."

"So it's having this real knock on effect all the way down of promoting competition and confidence through getting involved. Which is so important for the organisations we work with because like any social service the hardest thing is keeping them engaged and wanting to come back."

For more information about Happy Football Cambodia Australia, visit: [www.hfcaustralia.org/](http://www.hfcaustralia.org/)

# Street Socceros aim for success greater than winning

By Stuart Harrison  
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The Street Socceros will be hoping for more than instant success when they take to the pitch in Paris this week.

The team of homeless and disadvantaged men and women will be competing in the Homeless World Cup, the ninth yearly tournament where they will take on teams representing 48 other countries.

The players met in Sydney for a three day training session before flying to Paris last week.

Big Issue Community Street Soccer runs 25 soccer programs around the country involving around 2500 people.

Players get involved with the program through their involvement in drug and alcohol

rehabilitation, youth centres, mental health fellowships, multicultural cooperatives, or as a referral through their friends that may be involved.

The players come from a variety of backgrounds but all have a common experience of being marginalised by society.

Three of the eight players are from Melbourne, including refugees from Iran and South Sudan and a man who found himself heading towards homelessness after his mother died of cancer when he was only 18.

"Some of them are refugees, some of them suffered from issues like substance abuse or mental health issues. Some of them have experienced social

isolation, or a variety of the above," National Street Soccer manager Victoria Boag says.

When working with players from these backgrounds, the support staff hope to provide what can be a rare positive experience for the competitors, which they can hopefully use to better their lives.

"Obviously the thrill of being overseas and participating in the event is exciting but really we're hoping that they'll set themselves up to focus on some key goals when they get back and really use the positive experience to their own advantage," Boag says.

"Certainly players that have played in the past, as a consequence of that achievement, have a much higher level of self esteem and then have been able to continue on a positive path by either continuing their job, getting new jobs, keeping and up-taking study, or just trying to manage their mental health a bit better. It's obviously one of the impacts of experiencing something positive and it inputs into the self esteem and general well being."

The tournament also tries to help the chances of the competitors attaining better lives



Street Socceros in Paris

Photo: The Big Issue/ Homeless World Cup

by using its growing popularity to break down the stereotypes that remain about people that have fallen on hard times.

"The Homeless World Cup is not only a great sporting event but an opportunity to break down stereotypes towards homelessness and marginalised people, and start working together to find new solutions to homelessness," Big Issue CEO Steven Persson says.

This is why the Street Socceros will focus on winning the Fair Play Award at this year's tournament.

"We don't select a team based on skill. We select a team on whether people have the capacity to actually attend the event and whether they'll actually get anything out of it personally. So we're working with a really wide range of skill levels and as a result we're not go-

ing to be the most competitive team in the field and we'll focus on the fair play," Boag says.

"The ethos of the program is not about competing, it's about participating, having fun, making friends, and using the program as a catalyst to try and help themselves in making positive steps in their life. That's how we position the opportunity to the players."



Street Socceros in Paris

Photo: The Big Issue/ Homeless World Cup