

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Greta French Kennedy is a former scholarship holder and is presently supporting the SASI Women's Football Strength and Conditioning Program. Recently she was selected to play Futsal for Southern Australia which is selection opportunity for Australia. She has been interviewed by SASI Scholarship Holder Moni Holmwood prior to her trip to Christchurch, New Zealand.

1. Which Australian team will you be representing, which competition will you be playing in, and how long does the competition go for?

The competition in Christchurch, New Zealand goes for three days from the 8-10th of August. This is called the Viking's Cup. It is a tournament which will hopefully be held annually in either Australia or overseas. There are four women's teams competing; being New Zealand, Phillipines, Southern Australia, and Northern Australia. There are also six mens teams competing. I will be representing Southern Australia. The Viking's have a website if you want further information: <http://www.isport.com.au/futsal/vikfut/>

The competition in Spain is the first ever Women's Futsal World Cup, to be held in Reus, Barcelona. This goes from the 29th of September to the 5th of October. There are 12 teams from around the world competing, including Spain, Italy, Brazil, Argentina, Russia, Paraguay, Czech Republic, Catalonia, Slovakia, Colombia, Galica, and Venezuela. There is a website for this event: <http://www.reus08.cat/> For this competition I am representing Australia. There are ten court players and two goal keepers in the squad travelling to Spain. We are in the same group as Italy and Paraguay!

2. How did you get into the team?

The first round of the Viking's National League for 2008 was played in Brisbane over the easter long weekend. Although there was no (women's) South Australian team going I was given a spot to play in the Presidents Team, which included players mostly from the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. From this competition the Australian team was chosen.

3. How often have you trained for this competition?

Futsal in South Australia is non existent compared to other states such as Queensland and Victoria. For this reason it has been very hard for me to train. Although there are obviously great similarities between outdoor soccer and futsal, futsal is a very different game in terms of positioning and ball control. Before the national league in March I trained a few times with the South Australian Men's Team who were also travelling to Brisbane, however since then I have done very little training. I am lucky if I get to train once a week with a few other people. In July we had an Australian training camp in Brisbane for two days which was very helpful for me.

4. Where are your team mates from, and how much preparation time have you had together?

The rest of my team are from Victoria and Queensland. They generally play/train at least once a week with each other in their separate states. The only time I have had to train with them is the training camp weekend in July.

5. What do you hope to achieve while at the tournament?

New Zealand - I have had a bad run with injuries this year but am feeling very good at the moment, so my first goal is to play all the games! I would also like to score some goals, and make the final. It is also important to me to gain a better understanding of the game of futsal in this competition, mainly in relation to the rotation systems, as I need to build confidence in myself before the world cup.

Spain - I would like to be a starting player, and at least make it into the semi-finals. Do Australia proud!

6. Will there be any time for excursions?

New Zealand - I am staying in New Zealand for 12 days after the competition to explore!

Spain - We have been told we can stay on in Europe if we wish to after the World Cup. However I want to trial for National League so I am not sure if this is going to be possible at the moment...

7. What do you plan to do to recover between games?

Lots of stretching, icebaths, massage, walking, rest and good nutrition/hydration. The main problem I have is with blisters as I am not used to playing on a hard surface so keeping off my feet and ice foot baths!

8. How can aspiring players get into the team in future?

The squad for 2009 will be picked following the next round of National League in Sydney in January. If we are able to enter a South Australian side I am sure there will be fierce competition for places!

9. Do you have any advice for the players aspiring players wanting to represent Australia in future competitions?

I think we need to make futsal a part of South Australian soccer culture. We need to set up a weekly competition for girls/women to play in in South Australia, not just outdoor soccer. From this, a strong state side could be formed who train together regularly and who therefore are given the opportunity to play in interstate competitions and be selected for the National side. As there was no such thing set up for me I had to take a leap of faith and just go and play in another team in Brisbane, which I don't think many girls would be willing to do or even know they have the opportunity to do!