

Turf News Briefs

2002 WORLD SOCCER CHAMPIONSHIP • REAL GRASS IN THE SKYDOME

Canada Lands Worlds

The inaugural women's under-19 world soccer championship is coming to Canada.

The Canadian Soccer Association announced this spring that Canada had won the right to host the 2002 tournament over bids from South Africa and Ghana. The event will be centred out of Edmonton's Commonwealth Stadium with other games to be played at Winnipeg's Soccer Complex and either Burnaby's Swangard Stadium or Victoria's Commonwealth Stadium.

It is scheduled for late August-early September in 2002. Exact dates will be announced later.

Twelve countries will take part with Canada, as host, earning automatic entry. The tournament budget will be in the "multimillions," said Kevan Pipe, chief operating officer of the Canadian Soccer Association.

—*The Record, March 17, 2001*

Jays' Field of Dreams

The Blue Jays will play on real grass at the SkyDome if Toronto wins the right to host the 2008 Olympic Games.

Gord Ash, The Blue Jays general manager, confirmed his organization has agreed to let the Olympic organizers place

real grass in the Dome for at least the 2008 season if Toronto wins the Games.

"Their first suggestion to us was that they wanted to do it after the all star break (during the season)," said Ash, who is with the Jays in Florida. "But we insisted that if they wanted to do it, it needed to be in place for the whole season. And we've both signed off on that," Ash said. Marnie McBean of the TO-Bid also confirmed the deal.

Ash said the Jays are excited about the prospect of finally playing on grass. The team still plays on turf, which is very fast and springy and not as forgiving as grass in terms of cushioning athletes in falls.

"It's something we always talked about," Ash said. "The fans and the players want it and there are very few facilities that have Astroturf anymore. It's certainly going the way of extinction."

Howard Starkman, the Jays' vice-president of media relations, said that the existing turf at the SkyDome will have to be replaced in the next couple of years or so anyway and grass, if it can be maintained in a facility like the Dome, would be the way to go.

"We know it's do-able," Ash said.

There's a possibility major league baseball players could be competing in the Olympics by 2008, and the SkyDome would be a familiar venue to almost all of them. Minor pros took part in the 2000 Sydney Games.

Meanwhile, Craig Reddie, a member of the International Olympic Committee evaluation committee, raved about Toronto.

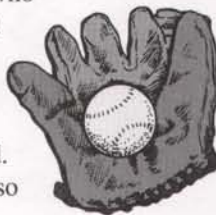
"It's a very special city,"

Reddie told the CBC. "There's something rather nice about cities beside the sea."

"And while it's not quite the sea, it's a very expansive piece of water."

Reddie, a member of the IOC and chairman of the British Olympic Association added he was very impressed with the job the Toronto bid group had done thus far.

—*Steve Buffery, The Sunday Sun, March 11, 2001*



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