

NEWS



Flat out: Martin Schlegel's company is another Commonwealth Games winner.

Picture: Lucy Di Paolo

Dandy firm has field covered

BY MONIQUE EBRINGTON

AUSTRALIA'S success in the hockey at the New Delhi Commonwealth Games may have something to do with a 'home turf' advantage.

The hockey pitch at the Major Dhyan Chand National Hockey Stadium in Delhi was made in Advanced Polymer Technology's Dandenong South factory.

This edge may have helped Endeavour Hills resident and Commonwealth Games athlete Chris Ciriello during the finals of the men's hockey on Thursday.

The 25 year old scored in the first half of the match, helping secure the Kookaburras' 8-0 win over India and adding another gold medal to Australia's tally.

APT has been awarded contracts to design and manufacture sports surfaces for major events including the Sydney Olympics, the Youth Olympics in Singapore, the Melbourne Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games.

APT managing director Martin Schlegel said he still felt a sense of pride in watching world-class athletes compete on the company's pitches, fields and running tracks.

"I often see the stadium when it is empty, so it is very rewarding to see the final product installed and in use," Dr Schlegel said.

"Some of the stadiums are also in really iconic places.

"The Major Dhyan Chand Hockey Stadium is near India Gate and is a very unique place."

Dr Schlegel said the Dandenong factory's 35

employees had shared the excitement of the company's Commonwealth Games contribution. "The contract has had meaning to all our employees, from the shop floor all the way to the top."

While the company has supplied track and turf for sporting events for years, Dr Schlegel said people were still surprised that it all came from a factory in Dandenong.

"Some people were surprised when we won the Beijing Olympics contract to install the hockey pitch for the games. They said, surely the grass must come out of Asia. No, it's made right here in Dandenong."

APT was one of 47 Australian companies to deliver on contracts worth more than \$83 million for the New Delhi Games.

Manufacturer on winning turf

A DANDENONG synthetic turf manufacturer has been named the state's top exporter.

Advanced Polymer Technology Australasia was named Victorian Exporter of the Year at last week's Governor of Victoria Export Awards.

The company's bread and butter has been the supply of world-class synthetic hockey surfaces, used in the Sydney and Beijing Olympic Games and Doha Asian Games.

Managing director Martin Schlegel said the award was recognition of all the efforts the company was taking in the market to export from Australia. "It's confirmation that it is still possible to manufacture in Australia and be somewhat competitive with overseas companies.

"People say China is the manufacturing hub of the world, but when it comes to certain specialised niches, we have the ability to find our place."

He paid tribute to the 35 workers at the Dunlopillo Drive factory.

"Our employees have taken the

positive step to get products out at high quality ... and the award is recognition of their efforts as well," he said.

While it is considered a world leader in hockey surfaces — its Poligras Olympia surface is state-of-the-art and uses 40 per cent less water than other surfaces — APTA supplies synthetic surfaces for different sports all over the world.

"Our export markets go from New Zealand, all the way up into Asia and as far as India and the Middle East and South Africa. We do synthetic surfaces for soccer, rugby, running tracks and we also manufacture construction chemicals like water proofing and crack bridging."

Mr Schlegel said sister company Sports Technology International provided installation services for APTA's products.

Acting Industry and Trade Minister John Lenders said APTA was a worthy winner.

Michael Randall



Top exporter: Martin Schlegel with the turf that has helped make his company Victorian Exporter of the Year.

Picture: Lucy Di Paolo

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Company wins export award

DANDENONG business Advance Polymer Technology Australasia Pty Ltd has been awarded the 2008 Governor of Victoria Export Award.

Spokeswoman Jill Long said the company, which primarily focuses on synthetic sports surfaces, prided itself on its exporting capabilities.

"We do a lot of research and development which allows us to stand up on the world stage," Ms Long said.

"A lot of stuff out of China and other countries doesn't suit Aus-

tralia's climate so we are able to use different techniques that other companies don't."

She said the award would help Advance Polymer Technology Australasia Pty Ltd when they tendered for overseas work – especially with the navy and similar organisations.

"We also work on local jobs," Ms Long said.

"A lot of work has been done with local schools during the drought, natural turf is too hard when it's dry and turns to mud when it rains."



Dr Martin Schlegel was excited to receive the award.

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She said the company also worked with world sporting organisations ranging from hockey fields, to soccer pitches, and

cricket grounds. "We supplied the running tracks for the Beijing Olympics and the Sydney 2000 hockey

field," Ms Long said. "It's just great that a local Dandenong company has been recognised for our work."



Factory manager Keiran McPhellamy gives the new turf a try.

Picture: CHRIS EASTMAN

Home turf at Olympics

A DANDENONG product will be front and centre at next year's Olympics.

Four-time Olympic veterans, Advanced Polymer Technology Asia Pacific, will be producing the striking blue hockey pitches that will feature in Rio de Janeiro.

The company will be making more than 28,000sq m of surface to cover four pitches and a warm-up area.

General manager Paul Kamphuis said it was "tremendously satisfying"

to see a local product on such a big stage.

"You get so focused on what you're doing business-wise, you can become blasé," Mr Kamphuis said.

"But there is excitement from everyone involved in seeing our work showcased on a global platform."

While the bulk of the surface will be produced by more than 70 staff in Dandenong, the actual synthetic grass will be installed in Germany, en route to Brazil, due to shipping time frames.

The surface was first installed at Melbourne's State Hockey Centre earlier this year with a second pitch to be fitted later in the year.

"So the Australian teams will have a fully-fledged training facility in Melbourne they will be able to use in the build-up to the games," Mr Kamphuis said.

The company expects to benefit further by producing pitches for other countries to practice on in preparation for Rio.

Details: advpolytech.com

Olympic turf to have Dandy connection

BY SARAH O'CONNOR

THE work of a Dandenong manufacturing company will be broadcast on televisions across the globe next year.

Advanced Polymer Manufacturing and its subsidiary Sports Technology International have been selected to supply the Olympic Games with artificial turf for the third time.

It will provide the 2012 London Olympics with six hockey pitches, two for competition and four for training.

But forget the traditional green turf. Advanced Polymer is manufacturing blue playing fields with white lines and pink run-offs, reflecting the colours of the London Olympic Games logo.

Managing director Martin Schlegel said there had been extensive consultation with elite players and television broadcasters about the colour change, and different shades were tested under various forms of lighting before a final decision was made.

"They wanted to increase the contrast between the ball and the surface for playability and broadcasting

on television," Dr Schlegel said.

Advanced Polymer Manufacturing won the tender to supply the pitches last year and was the only Australian company to make the final stage.

It also supplied the 2000 Sydney Olympics and the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

"That gives us a track record and probably sets us apart from our competitors, but it's not a given," Dr Schlegel said.

"That said, our product is regarded as being one of the best playing surfaces for elite hockey."

Dr Schlegel said supplying the Olympics was a "typical" Dandenong business success story.

"I find every day there are some interesting things being done in Dandenong."

The first hockey pitch — at a training facility — has already been constructed in London and the others will follow soon.

The 2012 Olympic Games will be held in London from July 27 to August 12 next year.



World stage: Martin Schlegel tries out the blue artificial turf.

Picture: Ted Kloszynski

translates to "Swifter, Higher, Stronger" in English.

Sports Technology
Australia managing
director Martin Schlegel
with the pink and blue
synthetic turf destined
for the London Olympics.

Picture: VALERIU CAMPAN
N410S408



Dandy's blue pitch for London Games

A DANDENONG South synthetic turf manufacturer is tickled pink and London-bound.

Sports Technology International has been successful in its bid to supply the London 2012 Olympic field hockey pitches.

The blue and pink Poligras Olympia surfaces will be used at training and championship venues.

"Contracts such as this cement Poligras as the world leader in

hockey surfaces," director Martin Schlegel said. "This showcases Dandenong's manufacturing capacity to the world."

This is STI's third Olympic hockey contract after the Sydney and Beijing Games. The company also supplied hockey pitches for the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne and New Delhi.

The company employs more than 35 people at its factory in Dunlopillo Drive.

"Due to the historic change in colour, hockey-playing nations are securing their own London Blue training grounds," Dr Schlegel said.

London Olympic Games director of sport Debbie Jevans said: "We are pleased to be working with the International Hockey Federation and installing blue hockey pitches in 2012. We are looking forward to world-class hockey being played on a blue pitch."