

# Phants gear up to boot Swans out of the park

Adam Kaminski

Football of a different kind will be on show at the Dongdok Stadium tomorrow as a fierce rivalry is fought out between Laos and Vietnam.

The Lao Elephants Australian Rules Football Club (affectionately known as "the 'Phants") will take on the Vietnam Swans in an exhibition match of Australian Rules Football (AFL), in what is sure to be a physical encounter.

The match will kick off at the National University of Laos Stadium at 4 pm, and Elephants are urging all of

their supporters in Vientiane and Laos to come down and watch.

The match will be the first game of AFL played in Laos since 2008 when Vietnam last toured. On that occasion, the Swans won by a slender margin, but the Lao Elephants have been training hard to ensure they register their first win on home soil.

The 'Phants will be led on to the field on Saturday by captain Santisouk Sengdara and vice-captain Phasay Souksombath.

Santisouk remained upbeat about the 'Phants' chances of victory.

"After a disappointing season in 2009 the 'Phants have been hitting the training track hard," he said.

"We lost a couple of experienced players but I think our new recruits could prove the difference. I have a lot of faith in the team and when I lead them out I know we'll be unstoppable on the field."

The Lao Elephants have previously hosted the Jakarta Bintangs and the Vietnam Swans in exhibition matches of AFL in Vientiane, and will host the Malaysian Warriors later in the year.

Despite having never won a home match, the 'Phants



Lao Elephants ruckman gets a trunk above the opposition at an AFL game last year.

have previously won: the Indochina Cup in Cambodia and put on strong showings at the Asian Championships in Singapore and Malaysia.

The Lao Elephants would like to thank their sponsors who have made holding this game in Vientiane possible: MMG LXML, Vientiane

College, Bor Pen Nyang Bar, Boart Longyear, Lotus Hall Mining, Reflex Instruments, Lao WestCoast Helicopters, Mekong Law Group, Carbon Bridge, Amantaka Hotel, Earth Systems Laos, and Joma.

AFL is typically played on an oval field between two

teams of 18 people, each with four on the bench. The game runs over four 20 minute quarters, and is played with an oval shaped ball. It is a full field contest with body contact and no off-side rules. The game moves at a fast pace and provides an exciting spectacle.

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# 'Phants future bright despite loss

Adam Kaminski

It may not have been the result that everyone was hoping for, but the large crowd that turned out at the Dongdok Stadium on Saturday was treated to a glimpse of the future of Lao Aussie Rules football.

After losing many of their key players over the off season, the Lao Elephants ('Phants) fielded a young and inexperienced side featuring seven debutants.

Despite the youngsters showing some promise, the Vietnam Swans managed to use their advanced years and better skills to pick out their targets and work the ball up the field. Their greater potency in attack was a telling difference between the teams, with the Elephants missing some easy shots in front of goal.

After playing four 12 minute quarters under Vientiane's searing afternoon sun, Vietnam emerged victorious 14.9.93 to 5.4.34.

But despite the score, the young Lao side showed that they have a solid base to work from, and only really let the game slip in the first and last quarters.

'Phants Captain Santisouk Sengdara said there were a lot of positives to take out of the game, and was upbeat about his club's future.

"I don't think you can read too much into the scoreboard from this match," he said.

"We put up a really good



Vietnam Swans player seeks refuge behind Duncan "the runaway tank" Handley to escape an oncoming stampede of Lao Elephants.

fight and often managed to get our hands to the ball first. At the contests we were very good at putting our body over the ball and protecting our team mates when they were under pressure from the opposition.

"Once we improve our skill levels a little bit I think we will be able to give the other teams in the region a big scare."

He said the 'Phants took a lot of confidence out of the match, and will now be focusing on preparing for their tour of Thailand next month.

After the match the Lao Elephants thanked the crowd who showed out in support, with Vice Captain Phasay Souksombath saying: "It's really good to see that we

have the whole of Vientiane behind us, as well as the rest of Laos.

"Unfortunately we couldn't get up today but everybody who turned up gave the players a lot more fighting spirit."

The Lao Elephants would like to thank all their sponsors in Laos and Australia who made hosting the Vietnam Swans possible: MMG LXML, Vientiane College, Boart Longyear, Lotus Hall Mining, Bor Pen Nyang Bar, Earthsystems Laos, Carbon Bridge, Mekong Law Group, Reflex Instruments, Amantaka, Joma, and Lao West Coast Helicopters. The 'Phants' next home game will be against the Malaysian Warriors in July.

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