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The Vietnam Swans and Miss Australia

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Last week, Miss Australia, Laura Dundovic, met with the Vietnam Swans for a photo shoot in their new, national jumpers (which were unveiled the previous month when they played the Singapore Wombats in Hanoi).

Miss Australia is in Vietnam as part of the Miss Universe pageant which will culminate with the announcement of the winner in Nha Trang on 14 July 2008.

Miss Australia was wonderful - witty, charming, personable, intelligent and charming. She is quite the consummate professional. Admittedly, while the Vietnam Swans don't profess to know too much about the world of Miss Universe competitions, without exception, they were extremely happy to endorse Australia's...



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Australia's nomination.

The Daily Telegraph, Adelaide Advertiser, Herald Sun and Courier Mail carried a photo of Miss Australia wearing our jumper next to the headline, *Miss Universe Australia Laura Dundovic sports AFL look but doesn't score*. The Miss Universe contestants had just completed the first competition, for the "national dress costume". Unfortunately, Laura failed to score a vote and some readers mistakenly thought she was wearing the Swans jumper as *the national costume*.

Laura was trying to do the Vietnam Swans a favour with the photo shoot, however, for people to think that a Miss Australia would wear the Vietnam Swans jumper, in a national costume competition, at a Miss Universe pageant, is high praise indeed.

The jumper took 10 months to design. As it happens, one of the key design criteria was that it should be national.

Leading up to 2007, the Hanoi Swans in the north were showing signs of weakening. The Saigon Saints in the south had hung up their boots a number of years earlier to focus on hosting their very successful annual AFL Grand Final Event.

By early 2007, there was a puff of wind of change in Saigon when a few people started playing kick to kick each Saturday. The puff became a stiff breeze and Hanoi and Saigon, together with some of our friends from Lao, went on to cobble together a Vietnam Swans team that played at the July 2007 Asian Championships in Bangkok. They played in the Hanoi Swans (Sydney Swans) jumpers which was acceptable as a short term solution.

The new national jumper needed to recognize the contribution and heritage of the Saigon Saints (red, white and black) and the Hanoi Swans (red and white) - hence the selection of red, white and black. The Southern Cross was then included to represent the birthplace of Australian Football. Given Vietnam is the birthplace of the Vietnam Swans, a yellow star was also added to represent the star on Vietnam's national flag. A dramatic Swan was added which is in keeping with a footy jumper.

Phil Johns, president of the Vietnam Swans said "Another benefit of creating a quality jumper was to give



Miss Australia and the Vietnam Swans

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Tim Johns, president of the Vietnam Swans said "Another benefit of creating a quality jumper was to give sponsors (Linfox, Loscam, Blue Ink Asia, Jim Beam, Bobby Brewers Coffee and Big Rooster Footy) more value through greater exposure. Being involved in activities in the community, such as the recent *Experience Australia Day* organized by the Australian Consulate and Australia Education International, also raises the profile of the Club and the sponsors."

In 2007, the Vietnam Swans Blog (www.vietnamswans.com) was created to give both Hanoi and Saigon a sense of belonging as the same club. It acts like a Club diary that is updated every couple of days. Players, friends and supporters choose to opt in at their own convenience. The Blog was launched in May 2007 and now, it is recording over 4,500 hits per month.

Johns said "A year ago the Vietnam Swans were at a very formative and vulnerable stage. Now in 2008, the bond between the players in Hanoi and Saigon is amazing. None of the players talk about "Saigon" or "Hanoi". A truly national identity is being formed. This is very important as it gives us two cities to draw players from for international matches - which means that we can have more matches. The level of enthusiasm is high as players feel like we are playing for a National, rather than a hybrid, team."

The schedule for the Vietnam Swans for the next 9 months is:

- 26 July – Lao Elephants Vs Vietnam Swans, Vientiane (Lao)
- 6 September - The Asian Championships, Singapore
- 28 September – The Vietnam Swans Vs the Elgar Park Dragons, Saigon (a visiting team of Vietnamese-Australians) (tbc)
- October – Vietnam Swans Vs A Visiting Naval Ship, Saigon (tbc)
- October – Vietnam Swans Vs on 6 September, possibly a match against the Elgar Park Dragons, Saigon (a team comprising predominantly Vietnamese Aussies)
- 25 April 2009 - Thailand Tigers Vs Vietnam Swans, Kanchanaburi, Thailand (the Anzac Day match)

For further information: www.vietnamswans.com

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