

Soccer Story

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Soccer: Oly-Whites turn to horse racing to cope with heat

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The biggest challenge for New Zealand Olympic athletes in Beijing will be adapting to 30degC to 35degC heat and humidity of 90 to 95 per cent, says a sports scientist accompanying the men's soccer team.

Andrew Foskett will accompany the Oly-Whites, the first New Zealand soccer squad to go to the Olympics, to Beijing with body cooling gel, gas masks, ice baths, compression stockings and a tonne of nutritional snacks.

The 18-strong squad will prepare for the sweat in China by playing several practice games in Australia, followed by two weeks of acclimatisation in Indonesia.

During games, players will wear special vests soaked in a cooling gel originally formulated for racehorses to delay the onset of fatigue caused by overheating.

"Fluid loss in football is normally between one and three litres per hour," Dr Foskett said.

But the heat and humidity mean the New Zealanders are more likely to be losing around 4-1/2 litres a match.

The team will have a week in China before the first games in Shenyang against China on August 7 and Brazil on August 10. They then face Belgium in Shanghai on August 13.

Dr Foskett, a lecturer at Massey University's Auckland campus, said the players will wear carbon filter masks in China to reduce the harmful effects of air pollution.

"Athletes are more susceptible to catching bugs when they're at peak fitness," he said in a statement.

Dr Foskett, a former semi-professional footballer in the United Kingdom, will provide coaching support with post-match recovery logistics.

He will provide technical analysis of player performance using specially developed computer software.

- NZPA

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