

AIS-European Training Centre

- The Australian Institute of Sport takes the next step to the London Olympics

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1. Introduction

The Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) has chosen the small town of Gavirate in the Province of Varese, Northern Italy, to locate the AIS- European Training Centre (ETC). Negotiations with the Province of Varese have proceeded with the design and will culminate in the construction of a major centre to house Australian athletes, medical staff, sport science support staff and administrative support staff over the next 10 to 20 years. The building should be fully functional in August 2010 and will provide Australian athletes with a base in Europe from where they can access extensive European competition and training opportunities. A sport medical and sport science network of support institutions throughout Europe is also being established.

2. Background and Plan

In 2001 the Australian Institute of Sport investigated an economical way of accessing the extensive European competition scene. After an extensive consultation period and an evaluation of costs it was decided to build a European training centre in Northern Italy. Since a substantial amount of Australian funds are used on international travel from Australia to Europe it was decided that a more efficient use of these funds would be to base our athletes in Europe for extended periods. In the future airfares will only become more expensive for large teams to travel to Europe and environmentally it is the most expedient way to react to the growing financial and global warming problems.

Gavirate- Varese Italy was selected because of its close proximity to major countries in Europe and its' warm to moderate climate conditions year round. The area has excellent rowing facilities, some of the world best cycling roads, facilities for swimming, basketball, volleyball, tennis, triathlon, canoe/kayak, sailing, equestrian and many other minor sports that are of importance to Australia. The building will contain accommodation for 50+ athletes including accommodation for handicapped athletes, a residence manager, administration offices, sports science laboratories, sports medical treatment rooms, physiotherapy rooms and rehabilitation centre, a number of kitchens, a dining hall and general cafe area, recreation facilities, meeting rooms, internet and video/teleconference facilities, plus a major strength and conditioning centre. Storage and warehouse facilities are also located nearby.

In addition to the ETC centre in Italy the AIS is developing a network of sport medical and sports science support centres throughout Europe. These centres will support Australian medical staff and sports teams when travelling and staying longer periods in Europe. The ETC medical support centres will provide diagnostic investigations, expert medical advice and treatment and rehabilitation if required. The sport science centres will work with Australian researchers to provide any evaluations and investigations the athlete require while in Europe. It will also be an opportunity for cooperative research with European researchers and institutions. The AIS hopes to conduct an annual SSSM International Congress at the ETC centre to collaborate with European partners to discuss relevant and the latest sports medical or sports science topics.

3. Conclusion

With the world in a financial crisis, the wise and efficient use of Australia's limited sports funding is important to enable Australia to maintain and improve its Olympic and international sporting success. The AIS European Training Centre in Italy, with its network of sports medical and sport science support centres is an economical and ecological way for Australia to gain access to the European competition experiences over the next 10-20 years. The international success of Australian athletes inspires the broad base participation in sport in Australia and promotes a healthy lifestyle for the young people of Australia.