



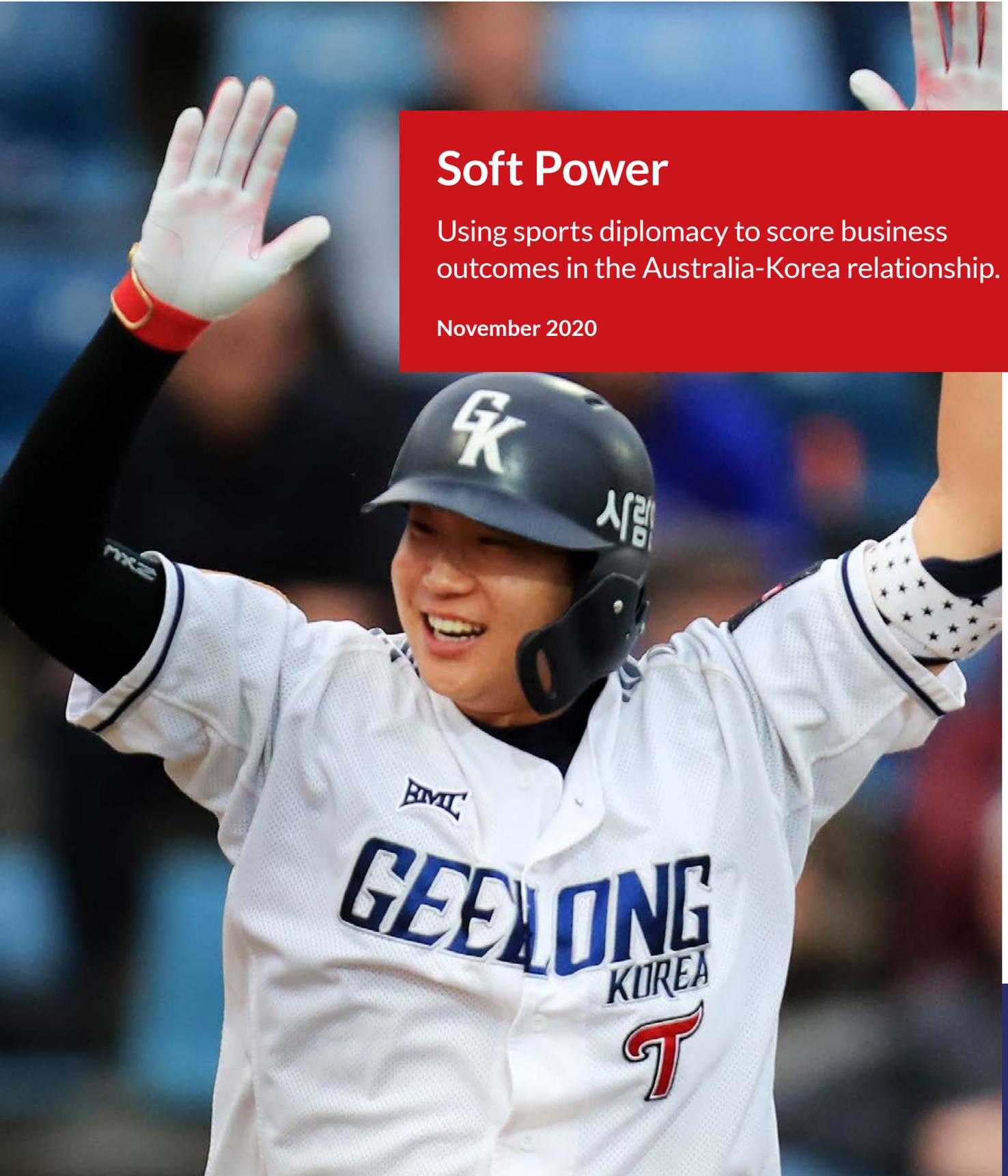
AUSTRALIA - KOREA
BUSINESS COUNCIL



Soft Power

Using sports diplomacy to score business outcomes in the Australia-Korea relationship.

November 2020



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1. Key Findings

This project is an example of sports diplomacy in action: Australians and Koreans playing, leveraging and using sport to secure business and diplomatic outcomes.

- » Australia and the Republic of Korea (Korea) have an untapped goldmine of talent, networks, resources and opportunity in terms of soft power assets.
- » Partnership between government, business and sport is vital to unlocking and harnessing sports diplomacy potential.
- » Coupling business outcomes with foreign policy objectives via sporting events is a low-risk, low-cost, and high-profile method of diplomacy.
- » Sports diplomacy presents an opportunity to re-think how the sports industry can be utilised to bring Australia and Korea closer.
- » Sustainable relationships built around the universal language of sport could help create strong and long-lasting connections between the people of Australia and Korea.
- » Despite the impact of COVID-19 on international travel, sport will continue to be a high-profile drawcard for business, fans, and government alike, and international sporting events and summits remain an important meeting place for diplomacy. Upcoming events such as the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand, and opportunities through the Asian Football Confederation and Australian Baseball League are potential platforms for sports diplomacy activities.



2. Acknowledgments

The AKBC would like to express thanks to those who contributed to this project. In particular, the AKBC would like to acknowledge Stuart Murray, Associate Professor in International Relations at Bond University and Gavin Price, an independent expert focused on sports diplomacy for taking a lead role in writing this report. Special thanks also goes to Chloe Yoo and Stephanie Hilton who assisted with this project during their internships with AKBC.

The AKBC is also grateful to the speakers who participated in the webinars including Cam Vale (Baseball Australia), Andrew Walton, Bruce Djite (Adelaide United Football Club), Trent Smyth (Sports Diplomacy Foundation), Chris Oxspring (former professional baseballer and pitching coach Lotte Giants), Fiona de Jong (Austrade), Andrew James (Populous) and Jooyoung Kim (Populous).

IMAGE - Hee Young Park, Winner of the 2020 ISPS Handa Victoria Open

3. Introduction

Established in 1978, the Australia-Korea Business Council (AKBC) is the leading bilateral organisation fostering friendship and understanding between Australian and Korean business communities.

In 2019, the AKBC successfully applied to the Australia Korea Foundation (AKF) for a grant to explore sports diplomacy between Australia and Korea and its potential to advance our bilateral relationship.

As part of this project, two webinars were held in June and August 2020. Entitled Soft Power: Using Sports Diplomacy to Score Business Outcomes, these events were moderated by the AKBC's Executive Director Liz Griffin and brought together leading industry experts from sport, trade, and government. They discussed how businesses could better engage with sports to advance bilateral relations, capitalise on upcoming opportunities, and better align interests conducive to mutually reciprocal, win-win outcomes.

This report constitutes a second output of the AKF funded project. It is the first ever report on Australia-Korea sports diplomacy. It adds to the body of knowledge that emerged during the webinars, describes the theory and practice of sports diplomacy, and suggest ways in which sport might be better employed to enhance collaboration between Australian and Korean diplomats, business people, and representatives from the world of sport.

The intention of this report is not to provide an exhaustive list of examples of Australia-Korea sports collaboration, but rather to provide an introduction to the benefits of sports diplomacy and key examples of Australia-Korea sports diplomacy in action.

4. What is sports diplomacy?

Sports diplomacy is a relatively new term that describes an old practice: the unique power of sport to bring people, nations, and communities closer together via a shared love of physical pursuits. It is a young field of study and a growing area of practice. Sports diplomacy can be defined as the “conscious, strategic and ongoing use of sport, sportspeople and sporting events by state and non-state actors to advance policy, trade, development, education, image, reputation, brand, and people-to-people links.”¹ The term also encapsulates a more inclusive, plural and “innovative” method of diplomacy: governments, non-state actors and sports organisations working together for win-win outcomes.²

The US Department of State first led the way via its SportsUnited suite of operations. These were introduced after 9/11 as a way of engaging disenfranchised youths in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Years later, Australia became the first sovereign state to introduce a specific Sports Diplomacy 2015-2018 strategy which, in turn, was followed by Sports Diplomacy 2030.

Designed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Office for Sport, and launched in 2019 by the Foreign and Sports Ministers, this second strategy seeks to capitalise on Australia’s passion for sports and increase brand, influence and national interests.

There are many benefits to using sport as a diplomatic tool:

- » Sports diplomacy is “low-risk, low-cost and high profile”³ and amplifies a nation’s brand, culture, and values.
- » Many sports organisations already have extensive international networks, meaning governments and businesses are simply leveraging an already well-established stakeholder environment.
- » Bespoke sports diplomacy strategies offer a comparative advantage over rivals not using sport as a diplomatic tool.
- » Sports diplomacy creates sustainable partnerships between government and national sports organisations, generates cost savings by combining resources, and encourages mutually reciprocal policy, trade and sporting outcomes.
- » Many sports people are “diplomats in tracksuits”⁴ and represent immense diplomatic value.
- » Sports diplomacy strategies increase a nation’s soft power ranking as well as the international profile of its cities and regions.

Attracted by such benefits, governments and diplomats are doing sports diplomacy. Yet, there has been little analysis of the business community leveraging this strategy. This project seeks to address this gap, by firstly examining the Australia-Korea relationship.

5. Australia-Korea Relations

Prior to the 1950s, Australia and Korea were geo-political strangers. This changed with the outbreak of the Korean War (1950-1953) when Australia sent 18,000 troops to Korea.

The formal diplomatic relationship began in 1963 and the two nations have enjoyed a prosperous economic bond ever since. Korea is Australia's third largest export market, largely due to the country's dependence on imported energy, resources and agriculture, and Australia's fourth largest two-way trading partner. The level of investment between Australia and Korea has grown significantly over the past decade, from just A\$600 million in 2003 to A\$49 billion in 2018.⁵

Like Australia, Korea is a developed, middle-power and liberal democracy. They share a common interest in maintaining the so-called "liberal international order" that has underpinned their security and prosperity in the post-Cold War period.⁶ People-to-people exchanges also matter to the relationship. In 2019, for example, 172,000 Australians visited Korea; a 12.9% increase on the previous year.⁷ In the same period, 280,000 Koreans visited Australia.⁸

Little wonder then that Australia is host to a large and rapidly growing Korean diaspora. The 2016 Census showed a 32.5% increase in Korea-born Australians since 2011 to almost 100,000 people. In fact, the population sits at 126,000, including those born in Australia with Korean ancestry. An estimated 50% of Korean Australians recorded in the 2016 census arrived in the ten years prior.⁹ Sydney is home to the largest population of Korean diaspora at 63,000.¹⁰

Trade dominates the relationship and, as such, the two countries remain somewhat culturally and politically "estranged."¹¹ There is a feeling among seasoned observers that the relationship should evolve beyond trade. As Bill Paterson PSM, the Australian Ambassador to the Republic of Korea from 2013-2016 recently noted, "the time may have come for both countries to reassess this relative detachment and to give greater priority to defense and security collaboration."¹²

Similarly, and thinking beyond the classical politico-military agenda, there is an equal opportunity to employ innovative foreign policy tools such as culture, art, music, "gastrodiplomacy", people-to-people exchanges and sports to strengthen ties outside of formal diplomatic channels.¹³ Of these, sports diplomacy is the most viable and presents a unique soft power opportunity to further bolster Australia-Korea ties while generating measurable business outcomes.

6. Sports diplomacy in the Australia-Korea relationship



The strength of economic ties and the growing interest in tourism represents a similar opportunity to enhance the Australia-Korea sporting relationship. Both countries share a passion for sports. Australians are fanatical about footy (whether it be rugby league, union or AFL), basketball, cricket, and football. The most popular sports in Korea are taekwondo, baseball, football, basketball, and golf.¹⁴ This shared passion for traditional sports, as well as new markets for e-sports, is pivotal for using sports as a diplomatic tool and accelerating business opportunities.

With Australia and Korea sharing similar time zones, but opposite seasons, opportunities exist to take advantage of this – such as tourism to Australia during Korea’s winter and Australia’s summer and opportunities for Korean sporting teams to hold training camps in Australia during their off-season. This would also pave the way for other engagement such as collaboration between coaches and referees and may open doors to business relationships and sponsorship opportunities.

Growing opportunities also exist in sponsorships of sporting events and activities, with businesses increasingly recognising the value of brand promotion and activation rights that come with event sponsorship. Korean car group KIA Motors is the longest running major partner of the Australian Open with the sponsorship deal representing the biggest sponsorship in Australian sport. Coincidentally, KIA extended its sponsorship agreement for another five years in 2018, the year that Chung Hyeon achieved success in reaching the semi-finals, marking the first-ever Korean to reach the semi-finals of a Grand Slam.

This section presents three case studies on football, baseball and soccer, however it should be noted that ties and opportunities in other sports such as e-sports and tennis are strong and growing.

IMAGE – Australian Open Tournament Director Craig Tiley, Kia Motors Executive Vice President Park Byung-yun, Australian tennis player Rod Laver and President of Tennis Australia Jayne Hrdlicka.

Football



One of the most productive sporting beltways comes in the form of the World Game. Since the early 1990s, when Greg Brown played for POSCO Atmos (now known as the Pohang Steelers), Australian footballers have served as informal Australian ambassadors to Korea. Adam Taggart (Suwon Samsung Bluewings), Jason Davidson (Ulsan Hyundai), Rashid Mahazi (Incheon United), Terry Antonis (Suwon Samsung Bluewings) and Brandon O'Neill (Pohang Steelers) are currently playing in the K-League and several others have also played in Korea, including Bruce Djite and Adrian Leijer. During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the K-league was one of few domestic leagues able to play games. This saw an 18% increase in viewers (3.4 million) for the 2020 Season.

Several Koreans have also played in the A-League, of which Hyundai has been a major long-term sponsor, including: Kim Eun-Sun (Central Coast Mariners), Jeon Ga-eul (Melbourne Victory), and Song Jin-hyung (Newcastle Jets). Similarly, former Swansea City player of the year, Celtic legend and current FC Seoul star Ki Sung-Yueng, has 110 caps for the Taeguk Warriors, yet honed his skills in Brisbane where he studied at John Paul College under the Brain Soccer Program and starred in a youth team that won the 2004 Bill Turner Cup (national inter-school under-15 soccer competition).

Senior men's teams also meet regularly in the Asian Champions League. Since 2007, Australian teams have competed against Korean teams in every single edition of the tournament. In the 2020 tournament, for example, Melbourne Victory played FC Seoul, Sydney FC faced Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors and Perth Glory played Ulsan Hyundai. These fixtures represent ideal staging posts for collaborative business and sponsorship endeavours that will strengthen ties between Australia and Korea.

International sporting exchanges also create valuable public diplomacy opportunities. In 2015, the Australian and Korean men's national teams played a thrilling match in the Asian Cup Final held in Sydney in front of 78,385 fans. The game was a sports diplomacy success. More than 1.8 million people watched the game in Australia and 5.8 million tuned in from Korea. Andrew Robb (Minister for Trade and Investment, 2013-2016) oversaw two Match Australia sports-business networking events¹⁵ arranged around the final, which provided platforms for the Local Organising Committee and Austrade to bring together 93 investors, buyers, stakeholders and clients invited by the Australian Government.¹⁶ The Australian and Korean national teams have also played several international friendly matches both in Australia and Korea, most recently in Busan in 2019.

IMAGE - Melbourne Victory vs Daegu FC, 2019 at AAMI Park, Melbourne

Baseball



Baseball ties between the Korea and Australia are particularly strong and provide ample building blocks on which to build diplomatic, business or sporting relationships. Australian baseball players such as Chris Oxspring and Warwick Saupold are household names in Korea and provide a similar 'diplomats in tracksuits' function to soccer players.

In 2018, Geelong-Korea, an all-Korean baseball team, was introduced to the domestic Australian Baseball League (ABL). The subsequent 2018/2019 season of the ABL was broadcast in Korea, resulting in a remarkable 667% growth in TV viewership, as well as a 74% increase in TV viewership in Australia. This also led to an increase in revenue at the ticket gate.¹⁷ The creation of Geelong-Korea has also led to the development of new partnerships in areas of sponsorship, broadcasting, economic activity and tourism promotion, including a sponsorship deal with Deakin University to help increase its student recruitment from Korea. The ABL looks to continue to expand Asia-Australia baseball links with potential new teams from Japan, Taiwan or China.¹⁸

Another example of Korea's involvement in Australian baseball is the Doosan Bears' annual, three-week training camp in Melbourne and subsequent friendly match against the Australian national team. Sponsored by the Doosan Group - a multinational conglomerate - the team is one of the oldest and most successful in the KBO League. The Doosan Bears first held a training camp in Sydney in 2016 and have since regularly visited Australia during the Korean winter. Such visits generate business opportunities off the pitch.

In February 2020, Doosan CEO Park Jeong-won travelled to Australia for 48 hours and attended the friendly match between the Doosan Bears and the Australian national team. A simple example of sports diplomacy during this visit was the facilitation of a golf game for the CEO at Royal Melbourne Golf Club - the feedback of which was overwhelmingly positive and this simple act was significant in ensuring Doosan's return to Australia.

IMAGE - Ro-han Kang, Geelong-Korea

Golf



Golf provides yet another promising and under-utilised connection between Australia and Korea. Like football, there are many players that move between Asia and Australia, and many with a shared heritage. Minjee Lee and her brother Minwoo Lee are two outstanding examples of successful golfers who are Australian with Korean heritage. Minjee Lee is currently ranked the 9th best female golfer in the world and together with her brother Minwoo Lee, serve as a powerful symbol of the close, diasporic ties.

In the past, Australian golfers including Marc Leishman, Matthew Griffin and Andrew McKenzie have all played and won on the Korean Golf Tour. Unfortunately, as the Korean golf tour is becoming more domestically focused, there are no current Australian players on the Tour.

The women's game is incredibly popular in Korea. Interest in golf among women in Korea traces back to the success of Park Se-ri in 1998 who, in her rookie season, won the LGPA Championship and became the youngest winner of the U.S. Women's Open. Her legacy is evident in how many of the world's best players are of Korean descent. Ten out of the top 20 players on the Ladies PGA Tour world rankings are either Korean or of Korean descent including current world number one Ko Jin-young.

Korea is the third biggest golfing market in the world and dominates rankings on the Ladies PGA tour. Koreans watch televised golf more than any other nation, with 15% saying it is their preferred sport to watch.¹⁹ Koreans also have high participation rates at 14%, with Japan and the US following at 11% and 9%, respectively.

Many Koreans make the trip down to Australia to play two key events on the Australian women's golf calendar - the ISPS Handa Victorian Open and ISPS Handa Australian Women's Open. In 2020, Hee Young Park and Inbee Park, won these tournaments respectively, demonstrating the depth and breadth of Korean talent in golf.

Despite the popularity of golf in both countries, the opportunities are under-utilised, especially by Australia. The sport's value to the Australia-Korea relationship should be recognised by those in government, business, and diplomatic circles. Australia has some of the world's most renowned golf courses in the world, with nine golf courses in Australia making the Golf Digest World Top 100 Courses rankings. The Royal Melbourne Golf Club which has hosted the President's Cup on three occasions and most recently in November 2019, Kingston Heath, and Cape Wickham are among the highest rated golf courses in Australia.

Australia's climate guarantees high-quality courses for tournaments at any time during the year. Golf tourism is an essential export of Australia. Victoria seeks to leverage this opportunity as showcased through the Victorian Government's Golf Tourism Strategy 2018-2023. This Strategy seeks to promote the opportunities for continued growth in golf participation and the attraction of international visitors, who tend to spend more on their visits than other visitors.²⁰

Inbee Park at 2020 ISPS Handa Victorian Open

7. Missed opportunities

Despite our successes in sport diplomacy, there is significant room for improvement. Several criticisms can be leveled:

- » Attitudes toward sport as a diplomatic tool are somewhat dated. Rather than viewing sporting exchanges as providing opportunities for diplomacy, sport is often over-simplified and misunderstood.
- » The perception around a Minister or prominent businessperson attending a sporting event for networking purposes is often negative and considered a 'junket.' A more mature narrative is required, highlighting that attendance at these events is an investment of time, which often leads to enhanced business opportunities.
- » Sports diplomacy exchanges are characterised by missed opportunities. The business community could have been invited to meet the Doosan Bears CEO, Park Jeong-won, during his 2020 visit, for example.
- » Relations between government, sport and business in both countries are still being formed; the 'dots' are not yet joined.
- » Sports diplomacy successes are sporadic, opportunistic, and one-off, rather than part of a sustainable strategic approach.
- » Popular and thriving sports diplomacy networks between Australian and Korean Universities, youth sports exchanges and sports science research initiatives have not yet been mapped and measured.

8. Recommendations: working towards a sports-diplomacy future

Despite the issues described above, opportunities exist to improve the role that sports diplomacy plays in Australia-Korea relations. The timing is ideal to re-think how collaboration might be improved between Australian and Korean governments, businesses, and sports.

Teamwork is vital

Forming a team between government, business and sport is key to any sports diplomacy success.

A team approach matters to effective sports diplomacy. As Rob Tranter, First Assistant Secretary at the DFAT, and architect of the world's first sports diplomacy strategy noted, DFAT sought to simply "join the dots" between a number of different organisations with similar interests that could be better aligned through sport. They sought to integrate systems, tease out common interests, avoid duplication of similar activities, and share expertise.

The key to DFAT's initial 2015 strategy was learning how to "work together and coordinate with other agencies such as Austrade or the Office of Sport to inform and influence foreign publics and partners, to promote sports for mutual and strategic advantage." Should Australia and Korea desire to use sport to foster closer relations, a similar team mindset between business, government and sport is necessary.

Leadership and a game plan

Leadership is critical to securing outcomes from sports diplomacy. In the Australian context, DFAT, Austrade and the AKBC are best placed to provide strategic direction to the diverse ensemble of actors and stakeholders who are working towards stronger diplomatic and economic ties between Australia and Korea.

To truly harness the soft power of sport, these organisations must become sports diplomacy leaders and highlight to decision-makers in government and business the opportunities that exist in the world of sport. This group should continue to work together to make sports diplomacy activities a priority to ensure the benefits of sporting collaborations are maximised.

More formal ambassador-led programs could also be explored, for example through ambassadorial partnerships with athletes, such as upcoming Taekwondo stars such as Australia's Reba Stewart and Korea's Lee Dae-hoon.



Working with athletes

Those working in sport, whether it be administrators, coaches or the athletes themselves, play a significant role in the success of sports diplomacy. Their buy-in is essential. To effectively engage these stakeholders, the value proposition of working with Australian and Korean governments or businesses must be clearly articulated.

Benefits might include:

- » Greater access for athletes and sports executives to business and government networks, and diplomatic events. A review of the Australian and Korean ministerial calendars to consider where synergies may exist with the international sporting calendar in order to strategically plan opportunities for sports diplomacy activities. A key focus would be to target opportunities for international trade and potential portals to promote intercultural ties between both nations via sport.
- » Government and diplomatic support for learning and leadership programs could be explored as a potential tool to assist leading Australian and Korean sports administrators, athletes and officials seeking to leverage influential roles at major international sports governing bodies such as the Asian Football Confederation and International Baseball Federation.
- » Seeking investment in an Australian-Korean sports business 'incubator' and supporting resources to enable more planning for major sports events in both nations, and longer-term legacy benefits for the respective economies.



Early runs on the board

Part of the appeal of sports diplomacy is its innovative and rapidly evolving nature. Such an ethos encourages entrepreneurial thinking. In this spirit, we have highlighted three areas for immediate Australia-Korea sports diplomacy collaboration:

IMAGE – An overview shows eSports gamers playing during a competition at the maiden event of Sydney's first dedicated eSports stadium. July 14, 2018.

Soft Power: Using sports diplomacy to score business outcomes in the Australia-Korea relationship.

1. Esports

According to a 2018 report by PwC, e-sports is growing faster than any other traditional sports. This is true for both Australia and Korea. Korea is a well-known powerhouse of e-sports, both in terms of competitive players and game development. Player Unknown's Battleground, for example, has an active player base of 250 million and is developed by Bluehole in Seoul. An Adelaide-based e-sports team was purchased by the Adelaide Crows in 2017. The team, Legacy E-sports, went on a Samsung-sponsored development trip to Korea where they had the opportunity to train with Korean players. In 2019, Optus joined Samsung Australia in becoming a major partner of the team. **As the industry grows, partnerships like this help to enhance the image and reputation of both Korean and Australian businesses.**

2. Training for 'diplomats in tracksuits'

Sports people serve as powerful ambassadors. The role of American sportspeople as representatives, messengers and heroes in the Black Lives Matter protest movement is a good example of the power of sportspeople to represent causes and affect change on a national stage. Sportspeople can also be highly effective diplomats. As Murray notes, a significant amount "... of diplomatic credibility is generated from heroic performances in the sporting arena, as well as genuine words or simple deeds and messages outside. Combine talent, heroism, failure, and genuine acts of humility and kindness, and the result is an incredibly authentic champion human being, one that many ordinary sporting plebeians literally worship; one that millions of people listen to, respect and believe. Authenticity means that sportspeople are more effective communicators than their celebrity peers, disingenuous politicians, or corporate titans of industry."

In terms of diplomatic communicative ability Australian and Korean sportspeople are force multipliers when it comes to diplomacy and trade. They can be more influential in shaping perceptions about their country than diplomats. **An event, workshop or training program bringing together real and sporting Australian and Korean diplomats to exchange knowledge, ideas, would be a world's first.**

3. The informal sports diplomacy summit

Sporting events bring together a cast of powerful people. Games and tournaments generate summits for high profile politicians, leaders and businesspeople to meet. Approximately 120 heads of state attended the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympic Games, for example. At the time, Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) saw the Games as a "magnet for high value foreign investment" and "the biggest corporate networking event in the world."

The sports diplomacy program included engaging British Olympic athlete ambassadors to spread the 2012 messages globally, a series of sector events, rolling trade expos and an on-site British Business Embassy. **The same logic should be applied to events where Australian and Korean sports exchange occur.** Some suggestions and venues for such sports diplomacy summits could be the KIA Australia Open and football matches between Australian and Korean clubs in the Asian Champions league. To maintain the momentum from this report, the AKBC, DFAT's Sports Diplomacy Advisory Council and other key stakeholders in both Australia and Korea should work together on specific Australia-Korea sports diplomacy initiatives. As a start, this group should consider hosting an Australia-Korea sports diplomacy forum that brings together key players, such as government, academia, business, sportspeople and governing bodies to provide a platform for discussion and action.

9. Conclusion

There is significant untapped potential to better engage with sport as a means to improving Australia-Korea business, government and people-to-people relations. Now is the time to take hold of these opportunities.

With every good idea, however, there comes a time to move beyond the conceptual stage, to determine the next steps. To facilitate this process it is important to first thank the AKF for their initial support, the presenters and participants that assembled for the webinars.

This project, its webinars, and this report are examples of sports diplomacy in action: Australian and Korean representatives innovatively engaging and working with sport for business outcomes. This report represents the end of one project and, hopefully, the beginning of a new sports diplomacy era in Australia and Korea relations.

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