

## Interview with Simone Ripamonti, Head of Sports Science, Melbourne City Football Club

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As head of Sports Science at Melbourne City Football Club, Simone Ripamonti looks after the conditioning of the club's footballers.

He spoke to The Climate Institute as part of the [Sport & Climate Impacts: how much heat can sport handle?](#) report released in January 2015.

### *Tell us a bit about your role.*

Basically what I look after is the conditioning part of the preparation of the footballers. My job is to make sure they are well prepared to perform in the A-League.

With the medical staff, we try to find the best optimized performance, not only from a physical point of view but from a psychological point of view and a biomechanical point of view. We make sure that the players are healthy, and that nutrition and hydration, are on the top.

[They players] have a long pre-season, you have to make sure that the training load it not too hard, not too intensive, and the recovery has to be a top priority.

### *When did you first start thinking about the impacts of climate change on sport?*

I started to think about it, basically when I came to this country, because sports science in this country is very high level compared to the rest of the world. Obviously every country has their expertise, but this country, they're really strong in terms of sports science.

For the players for example, obviously I have to look after them for example when we have the recovery, that they put sunscreen on and protect themselves ... If you don't take look after yourself for example, hydration, you are minimising your performance.

### *How do you see climate change impacting Australia sport, particularly football/soccer?*

We used to train on grass. But now we have to make sure that during the summer period the pitch is not too dry ... [the effect of dry conditions is strong] on their body, joints, ankles, knees, hips, lower back ...

What I have found because of the economical aspect of this job is that ... sometimes you are unable to stop the competition because there is a lot of interest in advertising, a lot of media around, and you cannot avoid the competition during the heat.

Sometimes for us, the sports scientists, it's really difficult to fight against the decisions coming from high level ... What I suggest is [that management] have to be conscious, that it could effect on the show. If you are not 100 per cent prepared to make the competition safe, then you drop your quality, because if you're under fatigue, and then you drop performance. Noone likes that.

If you want the people to enjoy the show, the game, you have to make sure that your professionals, your athletes, have [the best possible conditions].

### *What do you implement to deal and adapt to training and playing in the summer heat?*

Basically, if we know that it's going to be a period when it's really difficult to play because of the heat, the strategies are hydration one week before the game, and make sure we check every day. We do the hydration test early in the morning before the sessions start, and we check the weight pre and post-session, so we know exactly how much the players drop in weight, and we know how much they have to [rehydrate]. Obviously all of the strategies like the ice vests, ice baths, we try to cool down really quick.

### *Is it something that comes up to managing the future resilience of the game?*

I think the board need to sit down and discuss with the people that have expertise in climate change. Especially as I told you it's a money interest, the show has to go on, but the people have to be healthy and especially the athlete has to be protected.

*The full Sport & Climate Impacts report and associated content such as infographics can be found at [www.climateinstitute.org.au/sport-and-climate.html](http://www.climateinstitute.org.au/sport-and-climate.html)*