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## PLAYOFFS - LIVE IN AUSTRALIA

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David Lewis, a Hammers fan in Australia, faced a stark choice when his beloved side made the playoff final on Tuesday night.

He could either travel to England in hope of getting a ticket - giving up a few days' work at the company of which he is managing director, DLA - and risk returning sheepishly home having had to watch it on Sky in a pub within earshot of the Millennium stadium if he was unsuccessful in getting in, or he could share the experience, and a tinny or two, with his fellow Hammers Down Under.

As long as he could do a deal to get the game shown there.

"As a life-long West Ham United fan, I was terribly disappointed last week to find that the semi-finals of the first division playoff were not being broadcast in Australia - indeed, this season, we have seen nothing of West Ham at all," he says.

"I was even more dismayed when I realised that none of the free-to-air, nor cable, nor satellite TV services would cover the West Ham - Palace final on May 29th," he says.

"I wanted to see the game, but the prospect of 48 hours on a plane for 90 minutes of action, no matter how important, was just not attractive.

"Therefore, something had to be done; this position could not be allowed to continue.

"I had to see this game - no, wait, all Australian Hammers fans needed to see this game!

"The broadcast services were not right and the demand just had to be there - didn't it?"

So David, a self-confessed 'crazy antipodean' decided, literally, to take the law into his own hands - and, er, simply acquire the exclusive Australian rights to the broadcast of the match!

Like you do.

"I have agreed to underwrite and sponsor the event at personal cost," he admits, "so that all Australian West Ham - and Palace - fans may watch a game worth well in excess of £25m to both sides.

"I simply wanted to see the game, and this is the only option."

They say if you think you are crazy you can't be, though in this case, David's sanity, despite his self-awareness, may be in doubt.

Not to mention his bank balance...

"I understand that this probably confirms my lunacy as a mad Hammers fan," he says, "but sometimes one just has to do radical things!

"A football fan buying the exclusive rights to the broadcast of a match from 24,000km away? Please! Yet it has been done," he insists.

And who are we to argue?

The game will now definitely be on LIVE at several pubs and clubs throughout Australia,

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courtesy solely of David who, we assume, will not have to buy a drink in any of them.

A small entrance fee per head will be charged at each location to reduce - not eliminate - his expenses.

At this stage David expects the venues will be two in Sydney and one in each of Brisbane, Cairns, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

Viewing will be restricted to specific venues, namely:

Sydney:

The Sydney Aussie Rules Social Club, 28 Darlinghurst Rd Kings Cross 2011 (capacity 400)

Scruffy Murphy's, 43 -49 Goulburn St (Cnr of George St) Sydney 2000 (capacity 170)

Perth:

Sluggers Bar (Function room) at the Windsor Hotel, 112 Mill Point Rd South Perth 6151. (capacity 500)

Melbourne:

The Celtic Club, 316 -320 Queen St Melbourne 3000 (capacity 350)

Brisbane:

The Pig 'N' Whistle (Riverside), Shop 20 Riverside Centre, 123 Eagle St Brisbane 4001 (capacity 400)

Cairns:

To be confirmed

Adelaide:

To be confirmed

Any changes in details will be communicated here.

G'day!

by Khris Raistrick

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