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Hammers fan gets round Aussie TV blackout

By Ken Dyer, Evening Standard
 27 May 2005

Australian businessman David P Lewis is so keen to watch his beloved West Ham on TV next Monday that he went out and bought the television rights Down Under.

Sydney-based Lewis, 47, has been a Hammers fan since the 1970s and was distraught last year when he learned that the play-off final against Crystal Palace was not being shown on TV in Australia.

"I was panicking," he said. "I just had to watch that match but when I telephoned the TV stations over here, they said there wasn't enough interest. In the end I contacted the rights holders and asked if I could buy the rights to the match.

"They were gobsmacked to say the least," admitted Lewis. "Their reaction was, 'You want to buy the rights? Why? So you can watch it on your own at home?'"

"In the end, there was quite a bit of interest down here. I got a fair bit of publicity on the back of it."

"It was a terrible match and a miserable result but once a West Ham fan always one and I'm doing the same thing again this time. "I'm not allowed to reveal what I paid but let's just say that it would have been considerably cheaper to have climbed on an aeroplane and come over to Cardiff, assuming I could have bought a ticket.

"The match will be on around midnight here in Sydney on Monday night so I'm not sure how many will stay up, but I'll be wide awake.

"My wife is from London and I come over regularly to watch some football. I just hope I will be watching Premiership football at Upton Park next season."

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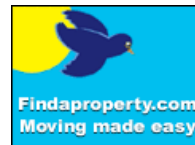
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