

The Vikings

"The Vikings" is the name given to Denmark's national representative Australian football team, consisting of players from clubs across the country.

{tab=The Team}

Jim Champion (Farum)

Coach

Christian Rose (Farum)

Captain

Chris Champion

(Farum)

Christian Møller

Larsen (Jutland)

Erik Krolmark

(N.C.)

Frederik Schmidt

(Farum)

Frederik Schulin

(Jutland)

Jakob Skytte

Ibsen (N.C.)

Jens Djernes

(Jutland)

Jesper Gjørup

(N.C.)

Joachim Secher

(Farum)

Jonas Holstein

(N.C.)

Kasper Sallander

Holm (N.C.)

Kristian Stetter

(Jutland)

Mads Brinks

(N.C.)

Mads Buhl

(Farum)

Mikkel Højgaard

Larsen (Farum)

Morten Engsbye

(Farum)

Nicolai Secher

(Farum)

Niels Schønne-

mann (N.C.)

Páll Finnsson

(Jutland)

Peter Bjarnum

(Farum)

Rasmus Jacobsen

(Farum)

René Damborg

Jensen (Jutland)

Thore Lauritzen

(Farum)

Troels Ottesen

{tab=About the Vikings}

The Vikings began life in 1992 when the North London Lions from the British Australian Rules Football League came over to give DAFL a footballing lesson. Proper internationals began in 1994 when Denmark played an international in England for the first time (losing again). In 1995, DAFL took a decision to exclude Australians from its national team, and it's been a rather more successful story since that time.

After the famous win in London in 1996, the Vikings haven't looked back. They have consistently had the measure of regular opponents, Great Britain. However, in the first international tournament of note, the Atlantic Alliance Cup in London in 2001, results were for the first time mixed as the Vikings lost to GB and to Ireland twice (who until 2005 had never been beaten in international games). The International Cup in Melbourne in 2002 was a more successful outing as the Vikings finished fourth out of eleven teams, headed only by Australian neighbours New Zealand and New Guinea, and the near professional Irish.

The traditional fixture against GB returned in 2003, but with the introduction of Aussie Rules to Sweden's largest two cities in Stockholm and Gothenburg, the Vikings have looked closer to home for more regular and economical international challenges.

Denmark and Sweden met for only the second time ever in June, 2005 in Farum, Denmark. It was a sensational match with a sensational finish - ending in a draw which should set up a fine Scandinavian rivalry in the coming years.

Unfortunately, due to financial constraints, Denmark was a late withdrawal from the 2005 International Cup in Melbourne.

In February, 2006, Jim Champion was appointed coach of the Vikings. The focus of the team shifted from annual matches against Great Britain, to a tri-series competition involving Sweden and Germany. Each team would have one home and one away international throughout the year. It was an interesting concept, but fear that it might be too one-sided were realised, with Denmark winning a particularly one-side match against Germany in Bielefeld. Full scores to the competition can be found here.

The tri-series will continue in 2007 with the venues reversed, as the Vikings swing into full preparation for the 2008 International Cup in Melbourne.

{tab=DK versus GB}

The Australian Rules football leagues of Great Britain and Denmark have already been able to generate a stirring tradition in the representative clashes between the leagues. The games, if occasionally one-sided, have always been battled out in the old firm but fair fashion. There were no premiership points at stake here (except, in a way, in London in 2001 and Melbourne in 2002), but it has always been clear that much pride, both individual and national, was.

The first clash dates back to 1994 in Acton, London. Great Britain were obliged, due to a sponsorship deal, to play no Australians. A sense of superiority compelled the Brits to say to DAFL "play whoever you like". The Vikings imposed their at-the-time domestic limit of five and in the end played four. That sense of superiority was justified as the Lions pumped a Danish side which included such DAFL legends as Peter McDonald, Kym Modra and Paul Blyth by a whopping 89 points. Bas Brown booted five for the Brits and was best afield. In the light of the matches since, this result seems almost incongruous. [Scores]

In 1995, the match swung to Farum in Denmark – the old Solvang ground. Despite the previous year's drubbing, DAFL made the courageous decision to exclude Australians completely, and damn the consequences. As it turned out, BARFL sent 18 players with an average age very much the wrong side of 30, which coincidentally was also where the mercury settled that day. The Vikings had closed out the match by quarter time. At half time, it was agreed that Great Britain's Australian coach, Kent Schubert, could take the field to limit the damage, which was over 11 goals by the end. Jesper Gjørup was B.O.G. with four goals. An odd feature of this match was that the then DAFL President, Doug Pate (who hailed from Scotland), played for Great Britain. [Scores]

By the time of the 1996 game, both leagues had accepted that there was no further point in playing any Australians in these games, and it has generally remained that way since. The venue for 1996 was back in Acton. Denmark sent a strong side coached by one-year-wonder-boy, Ben Howard, determined to break the home team dominance of these games.

The match was a cracker. Kicking against a strong breeze worth four goals, the Vikings kept GB quiet in the first quarter. Denmark used the breeze in the second and by half time were four goals up in a low scoring game and looking quite

safe. The Brits closed the game down in the third quarter, in which only five behinds were kicked by both sides combined. But the Lions had blown their last chance with the strong wind. The Vikings led by 22 points at three quarter time and had the wind. Surely the game was theirs?

Apparently not as the poms came charging home. They bomarded the forward line as the Vikings started to tire. If it wasn't for a disputed and controversial goal in the dying minutes from Anker Nielsen (the Vikings' only score for the quarter), who knows how the matches since might have panned out? As it was, the Vikings fell in by five points. It was the first time an away team had won an international. Dennis Klindt and Joacim Aulin were joint B.O.G. [Scores]

Back to Solvang in 1997 and another steaming hot day and another aging BARFL team were no match for the newly confident kings of international footy. GB brought over 17 players and borrowed two DAFL Australians, Clayton Coleman and Steve Schreuder who, oddly enough, had won the previous year's BARFL Best and Fairest. In return, the Vikings were allowed to put a ridiculous 27 players on the list as both played 18 on the field. Again the game was over by quarter time with the Vikings winning in the end by 95 points. Martin Holberg was B.O.G. and Hans Hervén booted seven. [Scores]

The series moved back to London in 1999 with a Vikings side determined to confirm their superiority – even on the road. The venue this time was Clapham Common, a ground all-too-familiar to DAFL veterans who had played on Fælledparken – a public park with a surface like the Hume Highway! The Danish team was well prepared by Stuart Stevens and were too good after an even first half and won by 64 points, with Páll Finnsson best afield. [Scores]

Back to Denmark in 2000 but in the spirit of taking the show on the road the match was played in Århus, Denmark's second largest city and three hours' drive from Copenhagen. The British unashamedly brought a green team over in preparation for the coming international tournaments in 2001 and 2002, and unfortunately it showed. The Vikings' domination was total as the Bulldogs could manage only three behinds for the match – not even a single goal. Erik Krolmark booted nine goals in a best-on-ground performance and the margin was 126 points. This match marked the beginning of the Mick Bolt-Stuart Wynn coaching axis of the two sides which continues to this day. [Scores]

In 2001, the sides met during the inaugural Atlantic Alliance Cup where Ireland, Canada and the USA were also competing. The tournament was intriguingly poised at the time of the game. The Vikings had just been thumped by the barnstorming Irish. A win would confirm them in second place and a spot in the final. A loss would send them down to third, but as the Americans had to leave for home early, the Vikings would make the final anyway. The British could displace the Danes themselves with a win, but it would have to be well in excess of 83 points, a tall order in a tournament where the average match aggregate was only 87 points (quarters were only 15 minutes long because the teams had to play four or five games in a week). In the main, both sides were playing for pride only.

Obviously the GB boys were a prouder bunch that day at Gunnersbury Park (another public outing, as incessant rain had forced the Cup away from previously arranged venues). Rank underdogs, they stunned the Irish-obsessed Danes with a quality first half of football and led by four goals at the main break. Believing they were the better side, the Vikings worked their way back into the game. The last quarter was an absolute thriller but a clearly more determined British side held out Denmark by two points in the shock of the tournament. Bulldogs skipper, Jimmy Sullivan, was B.O.G. [Scores]

Again the teams met as part of a tournament in 2002, but for the first time on neutral territory when they clashed at Warrabee Park in Melbourne as part of the International Cup. It was late in the Cup and both teams' destinies were again well decided by then and an injury riddled GB team were no match for the Vikings who won by 55 points, spearheaded by Páll Finnsson, B.O.G. again. [Scores]

With no international tournament to attend, the schedule reverted to the traditional one-off game, and it was GB's turn to fly to Copenhagen for the first international there in six years. Windy Hill in Farum certainly lived up to its name. Despite being played on the longest day of the year, it was a cow of a day. The Bulldogs opened well and lead early by two goals, but the Vikings pegged them back to be level at the first break. As GB had had first use of the wind, the Vikings were morally in front and went on to win strongly with the now-familiar scoreline of 12 goals to four. Christian Rose of Denmark was voted B.O.G. [Scores]

After nine clashes in a decade, the Vikings are leading in the race by seven wins to two. In all honesty, it is hard to see how Great Britain will ever be consistently competitive without some significant changes to the structure of their domestic competition.

{/tabs}