

Interview with Australian football player James Holland



After three and a half years with FK Austria Wien, Australian football player James Holland bids farewell to the long-established traditional Austrian club. The 26-year old midfielder (pictured above, right, with Australian Ambassador David Stuart) looks back at the most memorable moments, and talks about his time in Austria, his successes, and what he missed most about Australia. James talked to the Embassy team two days before his last game with FK Austria Wien at the ÖFB Cup Final.

James, you have played for FK Austria Wien since early 2012. What were the most memorable moments?

Obviously, the championship season was amazing. In particular, the game against Mattersburg at the end of the season was special. During the game we got an early lead and we were able to really enjoy the game, and enjoy the moment. Then there was the night when we qualified for the Champions League for the first time in the club's history. For a lot of boys it was the first time they had played in the Champions League. Those two moments stick in my memory.

We have counted 114 games that you played for FK Austria Wien. Would that be correct?

Something like that. Maybe a little bit more, if you include all competitions. I definitely played over 100 games, which is good. It has been a successful and special time for me over the last three years.

What are your plans for the future?

At the moment, I am not sure yet. Obviously, I am looking at staying in Europe. I have got my goals and I am quite an ambitious person. Hopefully I can hang around here for another few years and tick some of the boxes.

Your playing position is midfielder. Have you ever considered playing in a different position?

No, I mean, my position is where I have kind of found my niche and I enjoy playing there. I focus on what is best for the team.

We understand that your agent played in the same position?

Vince Grella was one of the greatest players in my position for Australia. Working with him

over the last year has helped me improve my game a lot. He definitely would not allow me to play in any other position.

How has playing in Austria been different from when you played in Australia? Is there a difference in mentality?

I think every culture has a different mentality around the world. The difference between Austrians and Australians? Hard to put my finger on it. The differences between the leagues are more concerned with history. When you play for a team like Austria Wien, you feel you are playing for something (special). You are playing for that history; you are playing for the fans, and I think that is definitely special. I have got a lot of very fond memories from my time here.

Let us talk about your time in Vienna.

For me it has probably been the best time of my life. It has been a successful period for me, but also because Vienna is such an amazing place to live in. I have made some lifelong friends. It has been an amazing three years. Vienna will always have a special place in my heart for sure. And I will be back.

Have you been in touch with other Australians in Vienna?

I have actually got a roommate. He is Australian, and he is an old friend of mine. He came over to live with me for the last six months. And I have met some Australians here and keep in touch with them.

We also understand that you went swimming at the Danube on a regular basis?

I always try to make the most of where I am and I am very adventurous. During summer, my friend and I have been riding our bikes to discover places where we could swim. We discovered the Danube, and we discovered a lot of amazing, beautiful places around the city.

What do you miss most about Australia?

Beaches, of course (laughs). I think you cannot replace that. Living next to a beach is something about the atmosphere. It is something that you cannot really replace, apart from my family and friends, of course. This is definitely what I missed most about Australia.

Did you do winter sports or go hiking?

I have done snowboarding, but not necessarily hiking. I have done some, would you call it - "bush walking"? I have discovered Austria as best as I could since I have been here.

We have seen that Austria Wien has a new trainer, Thorsten Fink.

He is a fantastic coach from what I have heard. He was a fantastic player. He was very successful as a coach in Basel. Our technical director says he knows him personally, and he thinks he will be really good for the club. I really hope that it is a good move for the club because Austria Wien is a fantastic club, and they should be on the top and I hope he is able to bring them back.

Did you follow Marc Janko's (an Austrian forward) career in Sydney?

Yeah, it was a very successful time there, which is good. I still keep in touch with the competition. It was good to see him doing well there. I know some of the players at the Sydney FC, and I heard he was very popular with the team and the competition, and obviously he had a lot of success as well.

Who are the up and coming Austrian talents in football, the ones that impressed you most?

Obviously we have got some young boys in our team, like (Marko) Kvasina and Tarkan Serbest, and then we also have Thomas Murg, who plays for Ried. He is a great player that I had the pleasure to play with for two seasons. I think there are a lot of young Austrian talents coming through. The national team is doing very well in the qualifiers. That generation of players is looking very good for the Austrian national team.

Thank you. We wish you all the best for the future.

You are welcome. Much appreciated.