

Baby in the Village - November 2005

Never get between a mother and her baby. I have been warned about that hundreds of times on the 'National Geographic Channel'. I witnessed why I was warned first hand a couple of weeks ago when my wife Lauryn was told the chances of her getting our baby daughter, Sierra, to stay with us during the Commonwealth Games were slim.

Lauryn moved to Australia from California in the United States back in 1999. Her parents still live there. My mother passed away in 2000, my father is now an invalid. We don't have family close by to look after a nine month old baby.

Originally I was told Sierra wasn't welcome in the Athlete's Village for the other competitor's sake. A screaming baby in the middle of the night in the next room is not conducive to good performances the following day. This point I totally agree with however the apartments in the Athletes Village are to be sold off to the public after the Games so I can only assume the one bedroom apartment I was asking for was going to be reasonably soundproof.

Next I read that she couldn't get through the front gates because she would not fit into any category for accreditation purposes. I have a bit of trouble swallowing this. Sure she is not an athlete, she is not an official, and she is not a volunteer. She is a baby. How about a new accreditation category called "B a b y"?

The last reason is laughable. Sierra is a security risk! That point is not even worth arguing.

Anyway on Wednesday Lauryn, Sierra and I met with Perry Crosswhite, Commonwealth Games CEO, and we eventually agreed to disagree. During the 12 days that we will be required to participate at the Games next March we will be staying at our home in Hoppers Crossing and commuting back and forth to the range.

Other options were discussed such as apartments near the village, but this wouldn't work as we would still need to get Sierra accredited to take part in the daily team meetings and other official activities that place inside the confines of the athlete accommodation. This decision will not impress our Team Manager or Coach whom both supported Sierra staying in the village.

The most disappointing aspect from my point of view is that part of the experience of any Olympic or Commonwealth Games is actually staying with the Team in the Village. For Shooters this rarely happens as the competition venues tend to be geographically quite far away from the Athletes Village. In March the competition Range is at Lilydale. It's about a 45 minute bus ride from Parkville. From Hoppers Crossing it is about 80 minutes.

At this stage I don't know whether I will be required to hand back my allocation of the 60,000 condoms that will be handed out to Village residents. If I had of kept my

allocation from the Athens Games last year we may not have found ourselves in this dilemma!