

Beach volleyballers set for battles

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THE Virgin Blue Regional Series is bringing many of Australia's best players from the beach to the heart of Bendigo.

Among those volleyball stars is Sarah Battaglène, who hails from Manly on Sydney's northern beaches.

Battaglène will team with Victoria's Lauren Spark in this weekend's series, which will feature top players, including Olympians and world champions.

Battaglène, who grew up around the northern beaches of Sydney, hopes the Virgin Blue Regional Series will spark interest in beach volleyball in Victoria's inland areas.

"A lot of people are converting from indoor volleyball to beach volleyball," she said.

"This is a great opportunity for people in Victoria to convert to beach and use all of their skills."

The 21-year-old has never travelled to central Victoria and said the main difference between competition in a beach town to Bendigo will be the wind factor.

"With us in Manly we are used to playing on the beach and in the wind," she said.

"Playing in Bendigo without the wind means rallies are going to go a lot longer.

"You have to do a lot more in beach and you have to touch every second pass."

Battaglène said the VicBeach concept of bringing the beach to the city is a great adaptation of what is done on the beach volleyball World Tour.

"They just bring in a load of sand and they play anywhere," she said.

"They are able to play in places like under the Eiffel Tower.

"I went to an event in Sweden where they did a similar thing."

Battaglène and Spark are hoping to perform well in Bendigo in preparation for the 2010 season where they aim to play on the national tour.

"We're going to play in the Vic series and play some other Victorian events before playing the Australian Tour," she said.

The Bendigo leg of Virgin Blue Regional Series volleyball action will start tomorrow night on the specially built court in the car park adjacent to Lansell Gardens in Williamson Street, off Pall Mall.