

# South-easter won't blow ceremony away

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Cape Town - World Cup opening ceremony organisers are confident they can handle their greatest fear on Saturday - Cape Town's notorious winds.

Although local weather forecasts predict conditions to remain dry throughout the day, fresh south-easterly winds are expected to strengthen by the time the lavish Olympic-style programme begins at Newlands.

"Normally our only concern would be with the wind, but we have put windholes in to safeguard the main props," opening ceremony choreographer Penny Jones said on Saturday.

"But I'm not too worried about the wind. My staff are completely determined and, although the main props are made up of large pieces of fabric, they are lightweight.

"We will secure these bigger props in exactly the same way as flags are held down when the good old Cape Town doctor (the south-easter) blows," Jones added.

The biggest concern for Jones will come during the opening ceremony's safari and ocean scenes, when giraffes, elephants, a whale and an unusually large octopus will appear on the Newlands turf.

Another concern will come early in the event programme, when possibly the largest South African flag ever made will be lifted by helicopter above the ground.

In all, 4 500 volunteers will take part in the World Cup opening ceremony, for which Jones said the total budget was well short of that targeted at an Olympic Games.

"Olympic opening ceremonies would cost in the region of R2000-million but we have a small budget of only R30-million," she said.

Saturday's opening ceremony will launch six weeks and 54 matches in the World Cup proper, with hosts South Africa taking on West Indies in the first game at Newlands on Sunday.

The winners of the March 23 final in Johannesburg will earn \$2 million, while worldwide television audiences for the tournament are expected to run into billions.