

Below is given a brief report of the **Australian Combined Events Championships** held in Perth on Thursday – Friday March 31 – Apr 1, 2011.

This report appeared on the AA website. I am unsure of the author, but I believe credit should go to Cody Lynch.

04.04.2011

Foote & Sims win gold at Australian Combined Events Champs

The Western Australian Athletics Stadium played host to the Australian Combined Event Championships late last week, as **Jarrold Sims** and **Lauren Foote** took home the gold in the men's decathlon and women's heptathlon respectively.

Heading home after day one with the lead, South Australian Sims maintained his position to win with a total of 7500 points ahead of silver medallist **Stephen Cain** (VIC, 6863 points) and **Matthew Harris** (NSW, 6722 points), who won bronze.

The winner of the 100m (11.02, w: +0.6) and 400m (49.07), Sims was thrilled to once again lay claim to the national championship.

"It's a pretty good feeling to be national champion, I feel like it has been a long time coming and to have the medal is a blast," Sims said.

"I had a couple of years off but am coming back pretty strong, this results is about 200 from a PB and that's a reassuring sign.

"The weather here in Perth is awesome and I've been impressed by the setup of this meet, a later start has worked well for me."

Foote, a former world junior championships representative, today added a third national crown to her burgeoning trophy cabinet after taking victory with 5539 points.

Joined on the podium by Victorian **Ashleigh Hamilton** (second, 5061 points) and **Lauren Bale** (third, 4967 points) of Queensland, Foote couldn't be happier with her dominant victory.

"You can't complain about a national championship," Foote said.

"My results were a bit up and down, but to come away with a strong win is a real plus and I am excited to compete at a new track in SA in a couple of weeks.

"And Jarrod (Sims) has won gold too so it's a great day for South Australia."

Meanwhile in the under 20 age group **Kyle Cranston** (NSW, 7189 points) reigned supreme in the decathlon, with local favourite **Loughlyn Webb** of Western Australia scoring 4509 points to win the women's heptathlon in front of her home crowd.

Doubling as the selection trial for the IAAF world youth championships later this year, the under 18 combined events saw New South Welshman **Jake Stein** set a new Australian record of 7427 points to book his ticket to the Lille-hosted event.

His second world youth qualifying performance, Stein will now begin a solid training block ahead of his first appearance in the green and gold in July.

"It's just unreal, I am stoked that it came together in Perth and that I carried my form through to the last event with a good 1500m time" Stein said

"With France in mind I'll shift my attention to some serious training now, prepare as well as I can and fingers crossed once I get to world youths I can medal and maybe even improve on my new record."

Stein was joined on the podium by **Jake Grevsmuhl** (QLD, second, 6862 points) and **David Brock** (VIC, third, 6861 points), whilst the girl's under 18 heptathlon was won by **Melissa-Maree Farrington** in a world youth championships qualifying performance of 5218 points.

Some further, personal comments are given by me on the following pages.

General observation:

It was great to see 29 males, and 38 females contesting the combined events competition across 12 age groups over the two days.

About 35% of the males and 33% of the females were Open competitors!

Open Men:

Full credit to Jarrod Sims of South Australia for compiling the very good score of 7500 points, and taking the National Championships. Credit must also be given to Victorian Steven Cain. After the disappointment of hitting three fouls in the second event of the competition, the long jump, Cain continued in the competition, providing formidable opposition to all other competitors throughout the remainder of the competition.

Cain won four of the five events on Day Two to produce a great Day Two score of 3856 points. How close might the competition have been if Cain had scored points in the long jump? The fact that Cain managed to finish second overall, despite scoring in only 9 events gives testimony to his ability.

Sims and Cain are the predominant decathletes in Australia at this time, but it was great to see the U23s starting to make their marks in the Open age group.

Third place overall went to New South Welshman Matt Harris, who was solid across the two days. Queenslander Andrew Hodges compiled a strong first day's performance of 3753. With improvements on his second day events likely to come with further technical work and increased strength levels, he should be a force within the next few years.

A couple of athletes were affected by illness. Cam Crowley from Queensland was unable to complete the event, and Courtney Heinze from WA was affected by a virus during the competition.

David Kinnersley of Victoria was another to suffer the pain of scoring no points in an event when he no-heighted in the high jump – usually a good points scorer for him.

U20 Men:

After a number of seasons out of competition recovering from an injury, Kyle Cranston was back with a vengeance. He won four of the five first day events, and three of the five second day events to become one of only three athletes in total across all age groups to score over 7000 points. His margin of victory was almost 500 points in a dominating display.

I believe that Kyle will be taking up a scholarship with an American University in the near future.

U18 Men:

Were we witnessing the future of Australian decathlon in the winner of this age group?

Jake Stein from NSW not only scored over 7000 points for the second time this season. He broke Queenslander (and Commonwealth Games representative) Jason Dudley's National record of 7419 points by 8 points. He also posted another World Youth qualifying performance.

Surprisingly, he won only one of the first Day events, but this was probably more due to the quality of the opposition rather than any deficiency on Stein's part. Queenslander Jake Grevsmuhl won the 100m (11.06) and the long jump (7.21m), while Victorian David Brock took out the high jump (1.97m) and the 400m (52.06m), while Stein's lone victory was in the shot (15.88m). However, his consistency across the range of events ensured that he finished Day One in the lead with 3818 points. On Day Two, 'the decathlete's day', Stein came into his own, winning four of the five events on offer, with only Grevsmuhl's 4.10m pole vault win preventing a sweep of Day Two.

Such was the quality of the first three competitors that, for previous versions of the World Youth, both Grevsmuhl and Brock would also have qualified. Unfortunately the standard for 2011 had been set at 7000 points. Grevsmuhl and Brock finished only one point apart, with Grevsmuhl's 6862 just edging Brock on 6861.

U17 Men:

Some more fine performances were produced in the U17 boys event. Queenslander Cedric Dubler lost most of the summer's training when he travelled with his parents to Europe for the European winter. On his return, however, he managed to win the Queensland title at the end

of February on limited preparation, scoring 5668. Dubler's first day score in the Qld event had been 3064. At the end of Day One in Perth, Dubler was well in excess of that total with a Day One score of 3391. However, in the evening between the two days of competition, Cedric rolled his left ankle while walking on the sands of one of the beautiful West Australian beaches. When warming up for Day Two, it looked doubtful; that he would even be able to start the competition, as he could hardly jog. However, demonstrating the multi-eventers determination, he not only started Day Two but managed to win the event with a new PB of 6222 points.

Also worthy of mention is young Western Australian Aidan Rossandich, who had finished only third in his age group at the Western Australian Championships in early February, Rossandich, who doesn't turn 16 until late September, improved on his State performance of 5227 to 5859 at the National titles, and secured the silver medal.

U16 Boys:

Jake Stein's younger brother Rhys dominated this age group, winning six of the seven heptathlon events, and taking the win by over 600 points. Rhys does not yet have the size of his older brother, but has the look of a boy about to 'sprout and fill out'. Second placegetter Tongchai Quartermaine also displayed some raw potential, and may be one to watch in the future if he works on some of the technical events.

U15 Boys:

Unfortunately for young Jake Andrews, he was the only competitor in this age group. Possibly parents of the younger age athletes were daunted by the expense of a flight to Perth, or possibly the fact that many young athletes in this age group still compete in Little Athletics meant entries were down. However, Andrews battled through the two days, and even had to overcome the disappointment of a disqualification in the last event, the 1500m, to claim his gold medal.

Open Women:

The women's Open age group provided its share of drama. Thirteen athletes commenced the competition, and thirteen finished. Along the way there were injuries to Queenslanders Emma Capell and Lauren Bale, but both managed to complete the event. Kiwi Sarah Cowley looked set to provide a great battle for the gold when she completed Day One only five points behind South Australian Lauren Foote. However three fouls in the long jump (at least one of which looked to be out around the six metre mark) put the kibosh on her bid. Despite finishing her remaining two events strongly, Cowley finished just out of the medals.

Second place in the Open Women's competition went to Victorian Ashleigh Hamilton. In 2005, Hamilton was one of the first combined eventers selected into the National U17 development Squad. It is so pleasing to see that she is still competing in the sport, and showing promise of the potential to compete at higher levels.

Third place went to Queenslanders Lauren Bale, who had been out of the sport for a while, but has returned, showing great ability in scoring just under 5000 points. While there were some very good individual performances across the board, I was impressed to see eight of the thirteen ladies run sub 2:30 for the 800m at the conclusion of two tough days in the Perth heat.

U20 Women:

While there were only five competitors in the U20 event, the competition proved very close, with the lead changing many times throughout the competition, as shown below:

After event 1: Elana Withnall NSW	After event 2: Elana Withnall NSW
After event 3: Rachel Hardy NSW	After event 4: Ruby Holten VIC
After event 5: Ruby Holten VIC	After event 6: Loughlyn Webb WA
End of competition: Loughlyn Webb WA	

In the final wash up, there were only 201 points separating first from fifth at the conclusion of the competition, and every competitor had won at least one of the disciplines – Elana Withnall (100H, Long Jump, 800m), Rachel Hardy (High Jump), Lauren Free (Shot Put), Ruby Holten (200m), Loughlyn Webb (Javelin).

What a competition!

The overall winner, however, was local girl (still U18) Loughlyn Webb, with 4509 points.

U18 Girls:

The main interest in the U18 girls competition lay in the quest by Melissa- Maree Farrington of NSW to post a World Youth Qualifying performance of 5080.

From the 'get-go', Farrington showed she was going to give everything to pursue that goal. She started the competition with a PB in the 100 hurdles (13.97). She then was equal first in the high jump (1.67m), second in the shot (9.81m) and first in the 200m (25.13) to finish Day One with 3193 points – a great position from which to shoot for the qualifying standard.

She started Day Two the way she finished Day One – 'on fire'. Her 5.75m long jump added 774 points to her tally. She followed this up with a 32.42m javelin throw, and finished her days work with a 2:27.26 time for second place in the 800m. Overall score – 5218 points, well above the standard need to put her in the Australian team.

Local girl Rhiannon Ormsby also racked up a good points total in finishing second with a score of 4730. Her best performances came in the high jump (1.67m) and the shot put (10.18m).

U17 Girls:

The U17 girls event produced probably the most incredible improvement in performance of any athlete. Queenslander Casidhe Simmons had placed only fourth at the Qld U18 Championships in late February with a score of 3790 points. In Perth she put everything together, producing a very determined performance to win six of the seven disciplines, and scoring PBs in six of the seven.

The only event where Simmons did not achieve a PB was in the shot, which she still managed to win.

Her total of 4712 added a massive 922 points to her previous personal best!

Second place went to local girl Ella Solin, who took a huge 180 point chunk out of Simmons' lead in the 800m, where she clocked an excellent 2:19.16, but by then 'the horse had bolted'.

U16 Girls:

More future talent was on display in the U17 girls' event. Queenslander Aliyah Johnson took out the event with the excellent total of 4989 points. Johnson won the hurdles (13.28), high jump (1.69m), and shot put (9.83m).

Her State team mate Shannon O'Dempsey won the 200m (25.80) and 800m (2:28.31), while ACT athlete Erika Vredembregt took line hours in the long jump (5.63m PB) and javelin (32.72m).

Vredembregt stayed close enough to O'Dempsey in the 800m to hold on to second place with 4593 points, ahead of O'Dempsey's 4562.

U15 Girls:

The U15 girls' competition was a battle between five local girls. After Day One, Melissa Maguire held the lead (2499) after winning the hurdles (14.42) and shot (7.90m) and sharing the win in the high jump (1.45m) with Shayne Solin. Kaitlyn Beaton won the 200m (27.86).

On Day Two, Beaton made her move, winning the first two events – long jump (4.82m) and javelin (29.29m).

With only the 800m to go, Solin held a slender lead with 3208 points, ahead of the closely bunched Beaton (3193) and Maguire (3190). However, Solin put the prize out of reach of the other two girls when she commandingly won the 800m in 2:29.86. Maguire (2:48.22) finished more than 12 seconds ahead of Beaton (3:00.6) to regain second place and snare the silver.

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