

QUEENSLAND ALL-SCHOOLS COMBINED EVENTS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2009
(& Invitation Combined Events)
Gold Coast City Athletics Track
21-22 November 2009

What makes for a good Combined Events competition?

- Is it having many competitors in every age group?
- Is it seeing some new talent emerge?
- Is it seeing more young athletes willing to have a go at this challenging event?
- Is it when you see an athlete making a comeback from setback or injury?
- Is it in seeing the athletes enjoying the camaraderie that the combined events competitions encourage?

At the Gold Coast over the weekend, the competitions ticked many of the boxes from the above list.

While the total numbers across all the age groups was only 20, there were some great struggles over the course of the two days.

Queensland All Schools Events.

In the **U14 boys' pentathlon**, there was only one entrant – 12 year old Kendal Newton-Smith from Greenbank State School. Newton-Smith tallied 1002 points for his first pentathlon, with his biggest point scores coming in the throws. Newton-Smith will again be eligible for this age group in 2010.

Coach Ian Fenwick brought his squad of four 'new recruits' down from the Sunshine Coast to contest the **U14 girls' pentathlon**. Fenwick's squad all showed signs of talent and good coaching, despite their youth. The girls were confronted by a 3.3m/s head wind for the first event, the 80m hurdles, but long-limbed Shannon O'Dempsey from St Teresa's Catholic College made light of the conditions, recording a strong 13.37s for 1069 points. T.J. Paehua from Pacific Lutheran College also went under 14 seconds for 1017 points, while 12 year old Starlea Wyllie (Mapleton State School) clocked 14.30 for 936 points. Not far behind Wyllie was Sunshine Beach State High School student Shauna Herbst (14.58) who also picked up sizeable points (898) for her efforts. Paehua made a move in the shot, pushing the 3kg ball out to 8.24m for 415 points. Next was Wyllie on 7.62m, followed by O'Dempsey (6.56m) and Herbst (6.17m).

After two events, Paehua led with 1432 points from O'Dempsey (1376), Wyllie (1311) and Herbst (1180).

O'Dempsey popped out an impressive 1.58m in the high jump, ahead of Wyllie's 1.50m. Herbst managed 1.40m, but Paehua could muster only 1.35m.

So O'Dempsey regained the lead (2088), from Wyllie (1932), Paehua (1892) and Herbst (1692).

In the long jump, O'Dempsey extended her lead, leaping 5.06m. Herbst (4.73) and Paehua (4.72) were very close, but Wyllie could manage only 4.26m.

With one event to go, the placings were:

O'Dempsey (2664), Paehua (2377), Wyllie (2301), Herbst (2179).

In the 800m, Wyllie took the race out early, while O'Dempsey was obviously running to coach Fenwick's instructions, checking her watch regularly to ensure she was on the desired pace. The tactic obviously paid off, with O'Dempsey overtaking Wyllie in the final stages to take out the race in 2:45.31. Wyllie finished a few seconds adrift (2:48.39), ahead of Paehua (2:53.58) and Herbst (2:58.04).

Final placings: 1. O'Dempsey 3177; 2. Paehua 2804; 3. Wyllie 2781; 4. Herbst 2563

12 year old Wyllie will still be eligible to contest this age group in 2010.

In the **U16 girls' heptathlon**, Jasmine Standing from Beerwah State High School demonstrated that she is continuing to improve as a combined eventer. While race walker Jessica Pickles (Beaudesert State High School) and Gold Coaster Natasha Town-Warner (Miami State High School) provided the competition, Standing demonstrated her superiority across almost all events, taking out six of the seven disciplines. Standing won the 90m hurdles (14.71) by two and a half seconds from Pickles (17.42). In the high jump (1.45) she was 15cm clear of Pickles, and in the shot put (8.63m), she was almost a full metre ahead, again from Pickles. In the 200m, Standing was again first across the line (28.72), but in this event, Town-Warner (29.93) managed to sneak ahead of Pickles (29.95) by the barest of margins.

At the end of Day One, Standing had amassed 2461 points to be 639 points ahead of Pickles (1822) with Town-Warner, competing in her first-ever heptathlon, a further 557 points adrift.

On Day Two, Standing began where she had left off after Day One. She took out the long jump (4.68m) and javelin (34.95m). Jessica Pickles also demonstrated a good arm in the javelin, throwing 31.73m – not bad for a race walker! Pickles' distance background showed out in the 800m but Standing emphasised her dominance over the competition, holding out Pickles for a mere half second victory – 2:27.96 to 2:28.46, completing a clean sweep of every event! Town-Warner only just missed breaking the three minute barrier, recording exactly 3:00.00!

Standing's overall winning performance was a very commendable 4218 points, highlighting her potential as a combined eventer. Her margin of victory was over 1000 points from Pickles (3330) and Town-Warner sneaking past 2000 points by a mere one point in her first heptathlon outing.

There were no U16 boys or U18 girls competitors for the heptathlon. However, there were three starters in the **U18 boy's octathlon** – Lindsay Newton-Smith from Park Ridge state High School, Ben Brown (Beerwah State High School) and NSW competitor Jay Mitchell (Trinity Catholic College, Lismore).

Like Jasmine Standing, Ben Brown is coached by Brett and Megan Standing of Glasshouse Galaxy Athletics Club. Jay Mitchell is coached by long-time Lismore coach, Phillip Newton, and Lindsay Newton-Smith is coached by another Newton – his father, Ralph Newton.

From the 'get go', Newton-Smith aimed to stamp his authority on the field. He took the 100m in 11.94, running into the teeth of a 2.1m/s head wind. Brown was next across the line in 12.10, with Mitchell not too far behind in 12.38.

In the long jump, Newton-Smith spanned 6.08m, but once again Brown was on his tail, recording 6.01m. Mitchell lost a little ground with his 5.77m effort. Newton-Smith was making every post a winner when he also took out the shot (11.91m). Mitchell clawed back ahead of Brown when he hurled the 5kg shot 11.43m, well ahead of Brown's 9.30m.

After three events, Newton-Smith led with 1868 from Mitchell (1687) and Brown (1664).

To finish Day One, the boys contested the 400m in very hot and humid conditions. Newton-Smith finished with a clean series of victories, crossing first once again in 51.41 for 751 points. Brown pushed back past Mitchell with his 52.59s run earning 699 points. Mitchell was almost an exact second behind in 53.54s, earning 659 points.

At the end of the first day, Newton-Smith had earned 2619 points from his first four events. Brown sat on 2363 points, only 17 points ahead of Mitchell (2346).

On Day Two, the boys faced yet another head wind for their 110m hurdles – a strong 2.8m/s breeze into their faces. Newton-Smith was a tick over sixteen seconds (16.01). Brown (16.86) once again edged Mitchell (17.29). The high jump was a close affair, with Newton-Smith clearing 1.84m, but Brown and Mitchell were close behind, both clearing 1.81m.

In the javelin, Mitchell's competition totally unravelled when he failed to have a distance recorded. Brown threw a respectable 47.08m, but Newton-Smith punished his competitors with a 55.46m effort. His grandfather Col Smith, Commonwealth Games gold medallist in the javelin in Cardiff (1958), must have felt quite some pride as he sat in the stands watching.

The last event, the 1000m run, also proved to be an interesting affair. Newton-Smith, who is known to have quite reasonable endurance qualities, led out, but Brown stuck close to him for the first two laps.

However, with 200m to travel, Newton-Smith switched gears and quickly opened a ten metre gap on Brown. While Brown, initially caught by surprise, responded, 'the horse had bolted'. Given the oppressive conditions Newton-Smith recorded a very respectable 2:51.80. Brown also recorded a very respectable sub-3 minute effort with his 2:58.98. Mitchell trailed home in 3:14.71, but had demonstrated enough over the two days of competition, that he could be very competitive in this challenging event if he were to devote some serious training to the event.

In the final wash up, Newton-Smith emerged victorious with a score of 5429 points. Ben Brown was next on 4858, while Mitchell, having scored no points in the javelin, had to be content with only 4103 points.

Invitation Combined Events.

The ladies in the **U20 and Open women's heptathlons** all competed together, as there was only one entrant in the U20 age group – Harriett Lawrence from University of Queensland, and four competitors in the Open age group.

The Open athletes included two University of Queensland athletes – Larna Dieckmann and Emma Capell, one Gold Coaster - Jay Affleck, and one New Zealander – Veronica Torr, who was contesting her first heptathlon.

Torr has moved to the Gold Coast to train with the Sports Credentials squad. Coming from a background of 100m hurdling, it was to be expected that she would lead the field home in the first event, the 100m hurdles.

This was indeed the case, but the head wind of 1.0m/s put paid to any fast times, and Torr was a little disappointed with her time of 14.49s. Next across the line was a much improved Emma Capell, who clocked 15.57. Capell, aiming for the standard to qualify for nationals (4000 points) held out her UQ team mates Larna Dieckmann (15.84) and U20 athlete Harriet Lawrence (17.28). Gold Coaster Jay Affleck, running four strides between the hurdlers, managed only 18.84s.

In the high jump, Torr had to contend with some tendonitis below the knee cap in her jumping leg. However, she still was the best of the field, clearing 1.66m. Once again Capell was on target, jumping 1.63m for second place in the event. Affleck jumped an equal PB of 1.60m for third, while the tallest in the field, Dieckmann, was left rather unhappy with her best effort of 1.51m. Lawrence also cleared 1.60m in the U20 competition.

In the shot, Torr continued on her winning way, punching out 12.52m on her first, which sat the rest of the field back on its heels. Dieckmann was next best, one and three-quarter metres behind on 10.75m. Lawrence threw 9.17m, Capell was a further 35cm back (8.82m), and the lightly-built Affleck managed just less than eight metres (7.92m).

Despite a slight head wind in the 200m (0.3m/s), Ronnie the Rocket took off from the gun with arms driving hard from the start. She established a strong lead after 100m, but began to fade in the last fifty, as both Dieckmann worked to close the gap. Torr's lead was too great, however, and she held on to cross the line first in 25.19s. Dieckmann (25.77) was a clear second, but the race for the minor placings was interesting. Lawrence took third with 27.56, ahead of Affleck, who was demonstrating some newfound confidence. Affleck (27.86) held out Capell (28.10) for a strong finish for her day.

After Day One, Veronica Torr (3281) held a more than 500 point lead from the rest of the field. Dieckmann was next on 2762, almost 150 points ahead of Capell (2614). Affleck sat on 2177 points, while U20 competitor Lawrence had earned a total of 2442 points for her day's work.

On Day Two, the athletes had the benefit of a tail wind for the long jump. However, Veronica Torr had difficulty finding her range on the runway. Despite some good jumps, none was with any wood under her foot. Her best effort of 5.40m (3.0m/s tail wind) had her toe almost 40cm from the foul line. Dieckmann was next best, riding a 4.3m/s breeze to 5.08m. The other three girls were all very close: Lawrence – 4.97m, Capell – 4.97m, and Affleck – 4.93m.

In the javelin warm up, Torr showed promise with one throw touching down well over 35m. However, in the competition proper she had to be content with a best throw on just the wrong side of 35 metres – 34.88m. Next best was Lawrence (30.50m) just ahead of Affleck (30.26m). Capell was not far behind on 29.32m, but Dieckmann had problems and could only hit 24.54m.

Going into the last event, Torr was aware of Dieckmann's potential to run sub-2:20. From the gun, Torr's aim was to prevent Dieckmann from making too large a break. In very warm and humid conditions, the girls toiled through the final two laps. After 400m, Dieckmann was only about five metres up on Torr, but gradually moved further ahead once the bell rang for the final lap. Dieckmann's long legs carried her to victory in 2:22.81, while Torr, hoping to sneak under 2:30, fell just short of this target with her time of 2:31.50. Affleck, again displaying new confidence ran a very controlled race, with 2:50 her target time. While run down by Lawrence (2:48.93) in the last thirty, Affleck maintained form and achieved her target with almost a second to spare (2:49.02). Capell may have been last in the field, but she knew she would come close to her overall target of 4000 points if she finished around 2:55.0. Arms pumping, Capell forced every ounce of energy out of her fatigued body, pushing hard to the finish line. Her efforts bore fruit. Her time of 2:54.37 would see her past the 4000 point target.

When the final points had been tallied, Veronica Torr, in her first full heptathlon, had scored a very strong 5195 points. Dieckmann was next best with 4503 points, almost 700 points behind. Capell had reached her national qualifying target with a small margin to spare, scoring 4048 points. Affleck finished fourth with her second-best ever total of 3673, while in the U20 age group, Harriett Lawrence easily surpassed the national U20 qualifying standard with her score of 3954 points.

The Open Men's decathlon was a two horse affair, with Gold Coast Victory athlete Lance Faulkner taking on rising talent Cam Crowley of University of Queensland. Given that Crowley had scored 6401 points to win the Australian U23 Championships in Hobart in early 2009, while Faulkner's best recent outing in the decathlon had been 4606 points in placing fourth at the Australian University Games, it appeared that Crowley had a mortgage on the event. However, given that the 21 year old Crowley was recovering from a dislocated left shoulder (his throwing arm), suffered in a pole vaulting accident only a few months back, it would be interesting to see how the competition would pan out.

In the 100m, Crowley's decathlon best was the 10.86 he'd run with a 2.5m/s tail wind at the Open Nationals back in March. However, he was confronted here by a 2.1 m/s head wind! Accordingly, despite running well he posted 'only' 11.16s. However, this was superior to the 11.38 he had run at the U23's in Hobart into a 1.8m/s breeze, so all indications were that he was in good shape. Faulkner clocked 12.13s, which was still better than the 12.37 he had run at the same track at the Uni Games into a much smaller wind (-0.9m/s), so Faulkner also looked in better shape than in his previous outing.

In the long jump, the athletes were able to jump with the breeze behind them, rather than into their faces. Crowley took full advantage of the conditions to leap a new decathlon PB (by almost 50cm) of 6.85m, with only 1.0m/s wind assistance. This was despite taking off from behind the board. Faulkner had board difficulties of his own, but from a decathlon point of view it was far worth, as he kept putting his toe beyond the foul line on all three attempts. No measure – no points! Given that he had earned just over 500 points for his long jump at the Uni Games, this was a serious setback for Faulkner.

In the shot, Crowley showed that his rehabilitation was progressing reasonably well, with a 12.20m effort – not far short of the 12.49m he had thrown in Hobart. Further emphasising the cost of the three fouls in the long jump, Faulkner showed he was in much better shape than he had been at the Uni Games, pushing the shot out to 10.95m, more than 70cm further than his Uni Games' effort.

In the high jump, Crowley once again demonstrated that he was a man on the improve. In Hobart he had cleared 1.93m, in the Nationals in Brisbane he had cleared 1.94m, but on a hot sultry day on the Gold Coast in November, he upped those performances to 1.97m. Faulkner's performance of 1.53m was no worse, but also no better than his Uni Games performance.

To finish Day One, Crowley was hoping to sneak under fifty seconds. He had run sub-50.50 in both his previous combined events competitions, so the challenge was there. Unfortunately with no one to push him, Crowley once again fell just short of the fifty second barrier, clocking 50.39s. Faulkner's 56.19s was almost a second and a half better than his Uni Games time, indicating that he had been putting in some serious training in the interim.

At Day One's close, Crowley had tallied 3795 points – a Day 1 PB by over 100 points. Faulkner was on 2132, but this could so easily have been over 2600 points but for the disaster at the long jump.

Crowley continued with his good form into Day Two. His hurdles time of 16.17s showed that he is definitely improving in this discipline as well. Faulkner's 16.85s also showed an almost three-quarters of a second improvement.

Showing little sign of the damage to his shoulder, Crowley hurled the discus yet another decathlon PB, exceeding his previous best by almost four metres, hitting 38.67m. Faulkner likewise once again showed improvement, adding about 2.5 metres to his Uni Games effort, landing the platter at 27.15m.

Faulkner was first in, and also first out, in the pole vault. However, he once more improved one of his PB's, clearing 3.00m. Vaulting as a right-hander, Crowley added yet another PB of his own in the pole vault, clearing four metres in a decathlon for the first time.

The javelin throw would be one of Crowley's biggest challenges, as the damage to his shoulder did not allow him to throw overarm with his preferred left arm. He would therefore throw with his right arm.

Faulkner's was up on his 42.64m Uni Games effort, but Crowley, who had thrown 47.67m in the U23s in Hobart could manage only 28.94m with his 'gammy' arm. This was worth 270 points less than his Hobart effort.

Crowley had not broken 4:40 in his two previous decathlon performances, so it would be intriguing to see whether he could get under that barrier despite the hot and humid conditions. Faulkner had been well over 5:30 at the Uni Games, so Crowley would get little assistance from Faulkner in his quest for a good time.

Running out the front by himself, Crowley quickly moved away from Faulkner, as expected. His lead grew rapidly, and Crowley looked set to achieve his target despite the oppressive conditions. Faulkner, meanwhile, was struggling. Crowley flew home in a new decathlon PB of 4:38.45, while Faulkner dropped into 'plod pace' for his last one lap circuit. However, he kept pushing on and reached the finish line in a very tired 6:03.27.

Crowley's winning total of 6738 was a new PB by over 430 points, despite his problems in the javelin. Once he is fully recovered from his shoulder problem, Crowley should definitely become a 7000 point plus competitor. Faulkner's tally of 4296 in finishing second could easily have exceeded his Uni Games total of 4606 had he not had the 'no distance' problem in the long jump.