

The heat was on at Multi event Championships

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In a battle of attrition, Westfields **Bradley Sharne** held off Asics Wests' **John Crandell** to win the NSW men's under 20 years decathlon at Blacktown on the weekend.

In warm and humid conditions Crandell started well showing surprising speed in the 100m (11.35) and the 400m (50.74). He led for most of the day and overnight was 13 points ahead of Sharne, who was below par in the 100m, in which he tore his hamstring. A further 19 points back was **Daniel Egan** (Trinity), with Queensland visitor **Lindsay Newton-Smith** in fourth.

On day two, Crandell ran a poor hurdles (21.05), losing nearly 400 points to his opposition.

“My personal best 400m from the day before fatigued me and at the start of the hurdles I felt dizzy,” he said.

“I lost my stride, but thought I just had to get it over and done with.”

The new event leader Sharne was also battling injury. He pushed on to a solid win in the discus (40.86) but a good win in the pole vault (3.20), by Queenslander, Newton-Smith brought him back into contention. Sharne's hamstring injury restricted his pole vault and he only cleared 2.60m, well below his best of 3.20m. Also in the vault, Crandell aggravated an old foot injury, forcing him to retire at 3.00m to save himself for his main event the javelin.

The javelin, was all Crandell. He blasted a throw of 62.67m for the best individual performance of the event. It also put him within reach of a World Junior Championships qualifier of 66.00m. His tremendous throw also picked up nearly 200 points on the next best, Newton-Smith. With the final event, the 1500m, to be conducted, just 60 points separated the leading three. Newton-Smith was in the lead on 5278 points, with Sharne second (5264 points) and Crandell third on 5218 points.

To take the NSW title, Crandell was required to beat Sharne by about eight seconds. Newton-Smith and Crandell ran together for most of the event, both clocking times of 4:50, while Sharne finished third on 4:57.52.

“At the finish I knew he was too close,” Crandell said.

Sharne who took the title by just six points or 1.4 seconds said: ``I went as hard as I could.”

At the end of the grueling 10 events Sharne’s total was 5838, with Crandell on 5832. The visiting Newtown-Smith scored 5895 to win the overall gold.

The women’s under-20 heptathlon was a comfortable win for Rachel Hardy, aged just 16.

“I was unsure about whether I was going to compete in this event because the hurdles were different and I had never trained on the higher height,” she said.

“Luckily it turned out OK, and I ran a time similar to what I would have run over the lower hurdles.”

Hardy clocked 15.38, just behind specialist hurdler Jacqui Fry who ran 15.21. In the next the event, the high jump, Hardy cleared a pb of 1.67m, the highest by any athlete.

“I leapt my previous best high jump two seasons ago, so it was great to finally surpass the mark I had set in 2008.”

Hardy finished Day 1 with a 133 point lead over Jacqui Fry. On Day 2 Hardy threw 29.41m in the javelin – another personal best. She finished the event with a score of 4449 points, beating Fry who scored 4196 points.

“I am happy with my overall score and hope to improve on it at the nationals in mid-February,” Hardy said.

``Doing a heptathlon is always exciting because there aren't many chances to do them throughout the season.

“I was very pleased with the javelin as it has always been my weakest event and to know I am improving, however slowly, is very encouraging”.

The open titles were claimed by defending champions **Jessica Fisher** (Hills) and **Matthew Harris** (Maitland).

Matthew Harris started well with a quick 11.10 in the 100m. Australia’s leading decathlete, **Jarrold Simms** from Adelaide, provided good competition for Harris. Overnight Harris led the NSW field with 3443 points, just six points ahead of specialist high jumper **Daniel Lawton** (Taree), who cleared 2.06m in the fourth event of the day.

Harris, recorded a poor discus (35.90m), but bounced back with a tremendous pole vault of 4.00m. Despite a slow 1500m of 5:21.50, Harris still recorded a personal best tally of 6368 points to take gold ahead of Lawton whose score of 6113, just

held off a fast finishing **Michael Barber** (Hills), 6102 points, courtesy of a super 1500m of 4:34.71. South Australian's Simms tallied 7127 to clearly win the event.

Harris, 20, returned to his tremendous junior level form which saw him score more than 7000 points (under-20 implements) in 2007.

Jessica Fisher started her defence of the NSW title with a time of 16.61 in the 100m hurdles, slower than last year's time of 15.75. She followed this up with an excellent high jump of 1.73m, but a poor shot of 10.32m moved her back to third at the end of Day 1. Leading was South Australian visitor, **Lauren Foote** with 3478 points, with surprise NSW leader **Kerryn Paull** (Bankstown) on 2690 points.

On Day 2, Fisher's solid javelin throw of 41.20m, sealed the NSW victory for her with a score of 4488 points, well below her 2009 score of 4913 points. Paull took silver with a score of 4167. Last year's runner-up **Romi Arnott** (UTS Norths) (who hurt her hip flexor in the high jump) took the bronze medal with a disappointing score of 3865 pts.

Overall victory went to the visitor Foote, with a tally of 5590 points.

David Tarbotton and Ron Bendall for Athletics NSW

Image Rachel Hardy – (photo courtesy of David Tarbotton)

