

Australian Open U23 & U20 Combined Events Championships
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by Peter Hannan

Open Decathlon

The Open Men's decathlon looked on paper to be a four-way battle for the gold between Queenslanders Jason Dudley and Kyle McCarthy, South Australia's Jarrod Sims and high jumper turned multi-eventer Kyle Rasti, now based in Western Australia. Dudley, bronze medalist at the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games, has returned to the competitive world this season after losing about twelve months to a navicular stress fracture. McCarthy has competed at a consistent level over the last eight months, posting quite a few scores in the 7300 to 7400 point range. Rasti, still eligible for the U23 age group, won the WA State Championships in a tick under 7200 points in January. Dudley and Sims had waged a wounding battle in Adelaide at the South Australian Championships, and as a result of that competition, came into the Australian Championships ranked number 1 and 2 in the country for the season at 7787 and 7707 points respectively.

As well as the above-mentioned, another Western Australian, Christopher Johnson, might prove to be a 'dark horse'. Despite not having completed a decathlon this season, Johnson had the credentials of having won the Australian U23 Championship in 2007, with a score of 6891.

Day One

With starters, the 100m sprint was split into two heats. Heat 1 saw Crowley, Dudley, Sims and McCarthy up against each other. They were challenged by U23 competitors Cameron Crowley from Queensland and Brazilian Diego Araujo, who had won the Pan American Junior (U20) Decathlon in 2007. Sims drew first blood in the battle, crossing the line first in 11.16, ahead of Crowley (11.32) and Dudley (11.45). Araujo (11.57) held out McCarthy (11.69) for fourth. Despite the head wind of 1.5 m/s, the athletes would all have been a little disappointed with their times, given the hot track.

In the second heat, the runners were a little luckier with the wind, which turned around to be a slight puff of 0.2 m/s behind them. This heat pitted four of the U23 competitors against Jason Dudley's University of Queensland team mate Bruce Kupfer. The U23 athletes in the field were Sandgroppers Kyle Rasti and Christopher Johnson, Victorian Aaron Page (winner of the Victorian decathlon state title), and Sam Giatrakos (the South Australian fresh out of the junior ranks). Rasti and Giatrakos raced neck and neck for the entire distance, with Rasti just edging Giatrakos 11.42 to 11.44. Hot on their heels was Johnson, who finished in 11.50, ahead of Kupfer (11.55) and Page (11.76).

Sims had taken an early jump on the field in the points score race, and led with 825 points, ahead of the relatively inexperienced newcomer Crowley on 791. Behind these two the next group were tightly bunched – Rasti 769, Giatrakos 765, Dudley 763, Johnson 753, Kupfer 742 and Araujo 738. McCarthy and Page were a little adrift of the field on 713 and 699 respectively.

The long jump was held in front of the main grandstand, with the athletes competing in its early afternoon shade.

Rasti, with his jumping credentials, made the best of the conditions, hitting his best of 7.06m in the second round. Johnson and Araujo were hot on his hammer, with both hitting 7.04m. Dudley was close behind on 6.97m. Sims and Kupfer jumped the same distance of 6.88m, while Giatrakos' second round effort of 6.85m was bracketed by a foul and a 5.44m. McCarthy's unhappy start to the competition continued, with his only valid jump of 6.67m coming the second round. Crowley still has a lot to learn about converting horizontal velocity to distance leaped, managing only 5.81m in the third round after earlier efforts of 5.28m and 5.73m.

The long jump competition had served to congest the leader board even further, with only 73 points separating seventh from first!

Sims 1610, Rasti* 1597, Johnson* 1576, Dudley 1570, Araujo* 1561, Giatrakos* 1543, Kupfer 1527, McCarthy 1449, Page* 1387, Crowley* 1337.

For event three, the task moved from the speed and elastic strength to explosive strength and power – the shot put.

Here, McCarthy began his move to chase the field. As expected, Jason Dudley hurled the cannon ball the greatest distance, with both of his valid throws over 14 metres, the best of 14.70 coming in the first round. McCarthy was the only other athlete to exceed 13 metres. All of his throws went beyond 13.50m, with his best, in the second stanza, measuring 13.82m. Johnson and Sims both threw in the 12 metre range, Johnson hitting 12.89m and Sims 12.78m. Kupfer managed to put one out just past the 11 metre mark (11.08m), while the younger competitors Rasti (10.85), Crowley (10.51), Page (10.36), Araujo (8.93) and Giatrakos (8.52) are all sure to improve over the next few years as their strength levels increase.

McCarthy had made a big comeback, moving into fourth spot overall behind Dudley, Sims and Johnson.

Dudley 2341, Sims 2264, Johnson* 2237, McCarthy 2166, Rasti* 2134, Kupfer 2078, Araujo* 1983, Giatrakos* 1940, Page* 1894, Crowley* 1853.

The high jump promised to be an interesting affair, with Rasti, Araujo and Kupfer capable of going 2.05m plus, and Giatrakos, Dudley and McCarthy all capable of jumping around the two metre mark on a good day. With a total of 16 athletes altogether in the U20, U23 and open age groups, Christopher Johnson was placed in the pool with the U20 competitors for the high jump competition. However, as the pits were placed side by side, he was able to keep tabs on what was happening with the rest of the Open men's competition.

Johnson, Page, Page and Giatrakos all entered the competition at 1.80m. All bar Giatrakos cleared on their first. Giatrakos failed on his first two, and must have been feeling the pressure of an imminent 'no height' when he approached for his third. However, he cleared easily to breathe a big sigh of relief. All athletes passed 1.83m except Page, who cleared on his first.

1.86m saw all jumpers except Rasti and Araujo (yet to enter the competition) on the runway. Johnson, Giatrakos, McCarthy and Kupfer all cleared on their first, while Dudley, Sims and Page required two. Crowley failed on all three, and was the first man out.

Only Page, Giatrakos and Johnson opted to attempt 1.89m, with the others electing to pass. Johnson bowed out, while Page and Giatrakos required all three attempts.

At 1.92m, Giatrakos' luck ran out, while Page and Sims needed an energy-sapping three attempts. McCarthy, Dudley and Kupfer all cleared on their first, while Araujo and Rasti, entering the competition at this height, also sailed over on their first attempts.

Araujo and Rasti passed 1.95m; Kupfer and Dudley needed only one; McCarthy and Sims required two; but Page exited the competition. 1.98m took care of McCarthy and Sims, while Araujo cleared on his second. Dudley, Rasti and all needed three as the pressure started to take hold.

Rasti bravely (sensibly?) passed 2.01m, which Araujo cleared on his first. Dudley and Kupfer failed on all three attempts and were gone. It was now down to the two U23 competitors.

Araujo was once again over 2.04m on his first, with Rasti needing two. Rasti again needed two at 2.07m, but this time Araujo needed three to stay in the competition. The bar was moved to 2.10m, and still two competitors remained. Araujo could not master this height, but Rasti squeaked over on his third. Having won the competition, Rasti opted to jump no higher, conserving energy for the upcoming 400m.

After an enthralling high jump competition, Rasti had jumped up into third, while McCarthy had also moved ahead of Johnson, pushing him down into fourth. The other relative placings remained the same, but Araujo had now moved to within 12 points of Kupfer, and Page had narrowed the margin to Giatrakos down to 10 points.

Dudley 3126, Sims 3022, Rasti* 3030, McCarthy 2924, Johnson* 2916, Kupfer 2863, Araujo* 2851, Giatrakos* 2645, Page* 2625, Crowley* 2480.

In the 400m, Araujo, Dudley, McCarthy, Rasti and Sims were drawn in the first heat, while Crowley, Giatrakos, Johnson, Kupfer and Page were allocated to the second.

The seeding proved to be quite accurate with all in the first heat except Araujo finishing faster than the winner of the second heat. In heat 1, Sims scooted around the track in 48.63, while Rasti (49.76) and McCarthy (49.89) also went sub-50. Dudley (50.16) finished just over half a second ahead of a tired-looking Araujo (50.73).

In the second heat, the lightweight Giatrakos took the race out hard, finishing in 50.62. Crowley and Page waged their own battle for second and third, with Crowley getting the nod 51.28 to 51.34. Johnson also had to work hard to hold out Kupfer, 52.00 to 52.22.

At the end of Day One, the first three competitors were separated by less than eighty points. McCarthy lurked in fourth 112 points behind Rasti. Johnson was a further hundred points adrift, but just nine points ahead of the Brazilian visitor Araujo. Each of the remaining competitors sat in a different century bracket, Kupfer in the 3500s, Giatrakos in the 3400s, Page in the 3300s and Crowley in the 3200s.

Standings after Day One:

Dudley 3933, Sims 3901, Rasti* 3856, McCarthy 3744, Johnson* 3641, Araujo* 3632, Kupfer 3578, Giatrakos* 3431, Page* 3379, Crowley* 3237.

Day Two

Jason Dudley was strong in four of the five day two disciplines, and would be hard to catch from here. Sims was about 100 points down on his recent performance in Adelaide but should still prove hard to reel in. Rasti appeared to be a man on a roll, and McCarthy had spent most of Day One playing 'catch up'.

For the first event, the fastest hurdlers on paper were seeded in the first heat and the slower competitors in the second. However, circumstances on the day can often dictate how the athletes perform.

Heat 1 saw Jason Dudley, Kyle Rasti, Jarrod Sims, Sam Giatrakos and Diego Araujo line up against each other.

From the gun, Dudley hurdled strongly into the 1.3m/s head wind, powering away from the field. Despite hitting hurdles four, five, seven and ten he took victory in 14.77 seconds. Rasti just missed breaking the 15 second barrier, clocking 15.01 for second. Sims chased Giatrakos all the way to the line, but was pipped 15.30 to 15.34. Araujo may have been affected by the increase in height from 99cm (the junior height) to 106.7cm and finished last in the field in 15.69.

In the second heat Chris Johnson and Kyle McCarthy pushed each other all the way and were rewarded with times that would earn in excess of 800 points. Johnson stopped the clock at 15.28 with McCarthy close behind on 15.41. Kupfer hurdled solidly for a 15.62 clocking, while Page (16.50) and Crowley (17.00) had to work hard for their points.

Dudley now had a 100 point buffer over Sims, who was now only 6 points ahead of Rasti. McCarthy was a further 159 points behind, but almost 90 points ahead of Johnson.

Dudley 4811, Sims 4710, Rasti 4704, McCarthy 4545, Johnson 4457, Araujo 4400, Kupfer 4354, Giatrakos 4245, Page 4056, Crowley 3861.

Discus would once again favour the bigger boys, and such proved to be the case.

Jason Dudley would have sent a minor ripple through his camp when he fouled his first, but he launched his second out to a massive 49.34m, before fouling again on his third. McCarthy had all three in the sector with his best measuring 42.95m. Strongly built Johnson also went over forty with his best of 40.58m. Despite their smaller builds, Sims (38.54), Rasti (37.89) and Kupfer (36.80) all threw reasonably to earn 600 points or more. Araujo (30.24) was the best of the rest, ahead of Page (29.71), Giatrakos (26.22) and Crowley (24.30).

The relative standings of the top five had not changed, but Sims had regained a little gap on Rasti, while McCarthy was working hard to stay on the same page. Johnson joined the lead four in 5000+ territory. Kupfer moved back past Araujo into sixth.

Dudley 5668, Sims 5345, Rasti* 5326, McCarthy 5270, Johnson* 5133, Kupfer 4954, Araujo* 4869, Giatrakos* 4636, Page* 4515, Crowley* 4215.

The last of the jumping events, the pole vault, was next.

Crowley, jumping with the U20 men, came and went early, with a best of only 3.00m. Page, also jumping with the U20s, started early at 3.40m, but had taken fourteen jumps by the time the bar was raised to 4.10m. This height proved too much for him. By contrast, Araujo entered at 3.80m, needing two attempts. He passed 3.90m before needing two attempts at 4.00m. Once again he passed, but failed to put his highest point on top of the bar at 4.20m and bowed out. Giatrakos and Kupfer both started at 4.00m and cleared this height, and their next (4.20) on their first attempts. Giatrakos needed two at 4.30, while Kupfer needed three. However, at 4.40m Kupfer sailed over on his first while Giatrakos came unstuck. Kupfer then failed at 4.50m. Sims and McCarthy opened at 4.20m. Both cleared first time and passed 4.30m. At 4.40m, they both needed two. McCarthy cleared 4.50m, again on his second, but Sims exited at this point. McCarthy was then unsuccessful at 4.50m. Rasti had looked in fine form during warm up, and entered confidently at 4.30m, managing a first up clearance. At 4.40m, Johnson entered the competition, but needed three attempts to negotiate this height. Rasti needed two, and Dudley had yet to enter.

At 4.50m, Dudley had his first charge down the runway and cleared on first attempt. McCarthy and Johnson both need two. Dudley passed 4.60m – a height that neither Johnson nor McCarthy could master. Dudley then needed three at 4.70, two at 4.80 and three at 4.90, before finishing, looking quite fatigued, at 5.00m.

Dudley 6548, Sims 6076, Rasti* 6057, McCarthy 6030, Johnson* 5893, Kupfer 5685, Araujo* 5486, Giatrakos* 5338, Page* 5132, Crowley* 4572.

The javelin was again split into two pools. Most of the athletes who had finished earlier in the pole vault threw in the first pool, while Dudley and Page competed in the second.

After the first round in pool 1, McCarthy led with a good throw of 57.11m from Rasti (52.46) and Johnson (52.28). Sims was not far behind with a 49.90m effort and Araujo was also in the forty metre range with his 46.18m throw. Kupfer (38.45) and Giatrakos (37.43) produced only mediocre throws, but Crowley, demonstrating little knowledge of throwing the spear, recorded a foul. In round two, Johnson (54.25), Rasti (55.22), Araujo (48.13), Kupfer (47.47) and Giatrakos (41.71) all improved. McCarthy threw a very ordinary 46.89m and Crowley recorded another foul. In the final round, Johnson hit a big one – 60.66m. McCarthy improved to 57.21m, and Rasti eked out another half a metre to 55.84m. Giatrakos also improved, to 44.99m. Sims was consistent, but his third round throw of 48.30 wasn't enough to improve his score. Araujo, Kupfer and Crowley all fouled their last, with Crowley scoring zero points after failing to record a distance.

In pool 2, Jason Dudley fired one out early to 61.66m. His second (59.96) and third (61.14) were in similar territory. Page fouled his first before recording a 40.46 in the second round, and 41.11 in the last.

With one event remaining, Dudley had almost a 600 point jump on the field. Rasti and McCarthy had both jumped past Sims, with McCarthy sitting only six points behind Rasti, and Sims now 63 points behind McCarthy. Johnson, by virtue of his big throw, was now only 22 points behind Sims. Araujo was still almost 200 points behind Kupfer, with Giatrakos 90 plus points further back.

Dudley 7311, Rasti* 6732, McCarthy 6726, Sims 6663, Johnson* 6641, Kupfer 6236, Araujo* 6047, Giatrakos* 5853, Page* 5590, Crowley* 4572.

In the 1500m, Dudley was so far ahead that he could just about take a stroll and still win the event. It remained to be seen whether he would 'go for it' and attempt to reach the A qualifying standard of 8000 points. This would require him to run the 1500m in 4:38.70 or better. Given his past history of performances in the event, this seemed highly unlikely.

Sims, having sat no lower than second on the leader board for the first eight events, would now have to fight to even win a medal! Still, he was the only man in the field to have posted a sub-4min 30 time this season, so the others would really have to work hard to earn their medallions.

Sims did indeed run a fine three and three-quarter laps, but Rasti refused to let him get too far away. Sims crossed in a none-too-shabby 4:32.84, but Rasti was only a couple of seconds behind in 4:34.99. It remained to be seen whether McCarthy, whose best this season had been a 4:41.99 way back in June last year, could do enough to withstand the challenge from Sims. As McCarthy entered the straight, he had Araujo ahead of him. With someone to chase, McCarthy pulled out all stops, just failing to catch Araujo (4:40.24), but recording a season PB of 4:40.34. Page, who had run 4:42.41 in winning the Victorian Championships, went just over a half second faster here, running 4:41.89. Not far behind was Giatrakos, who ran under 4:45 for the first time this season, clocking 4:44.29. Crowley (4:54.74) and Johnson (4:56.00) both snuck under 5 minutes, while Dudley and Kupfer cruised along well behind the field. Dudley finished ahead of his team mate, 5:15.86 to 5:17.79.

Dudley's time was still good enough to carry him past the Olympic B qualifying standard of 7700 points. His score of 7783 was more than 300 points better than second place getter Rasti on 7444. Also beyond 7400 was McCarthy, whose 7404 kept Sims out of the medals by a mere 15 points! Johnson, with his score of 7224, finished fifth overall, but second to Rasti in the under 23 competition. The fine performance of Portuguese-speaking Diego Araujo in the 1500m carried him to a total of 6726 points, which was enough to bump Bruce Kupfer back to seventh (6698). Araujo finished third in the under 23 competition, but Sam Giatrakos (6507) was awarded a bronze as third-placed Australian. Aaron Page finished with 6258 points, 28 more than he had scored in winning the Victorian Championships. Crowley accumulated only 5162 points, but his total was obviously strongly affected by his three fouls in the javelin.

One of the interesting facts from this absorbing competition was that there had been no withdrawals from the competition due to injury, a tribute to the preparation of the men for this event. A very positive sign for the future is that the oldest man in the field, Kyle McCarthy, is only 26 this year. Dudley and Sims both will have their 24th birthdays in 2008. Rasti, Johnson and Page will all move up into the Open ranks next year. With the anticipated return in 2009 of Erik Surjan and Richard Allan (both missing the event this year due to injury), the future of decathlon in Australia looks bright.

Giatrakos and Crowley will still be under 23 in 2009, but will be joined by some very talented younger athletes coming through the ranks – Matt Harris, Hamish Nelson, Shaun Hargreaves and John Lane to name a few.

U20 Men's Decathlon

The U20 men's combined event would be a punter's nightmare going into the competition. Queenslander Adam Bevis had the highest score on the books but he had suffered a facial injury back in November which had hampered severely the amount of track work he had been able to do during November, December and January. Matt Harris from New South Wales had been doing most of his training in the pool because of a persistent ankle injury. John Lane of Queensland had sprained his foot in a high jump mishap on the Monday before the championships. Luke Hallett from Mackay had had his training affected by the floods which had ravaged his home town in the preceding few weeks. It was anyone's guess as to who would be able to put the best combination of events together over the next two days.

Day One

When the U20 lads lined up for their first event, the 100m, the first two heats of the Open and U23 men had just been run. The quickest of the two heats had been won by South Australian Jarrod Sims (11.16) running into a 1.2 metre/sec head wind. All eight starters for the U20 men's race were in the one heat. The fickle wind swung around behind the athletes for this race, to the tune of 1.5 metres per second.

Quickest on paper coming into this race were the Queenslanders John Lane (10.6h) and Adam Bevis (10.99). At the firing of the gun, Lane got just an average start, but he soon got into stride, moving away from the rest of the field. Closest in chase was Bevis, bronze medalist from the World Youth Championships in Ostrava in 2007. Lane hit the

line in 10.84, proving his hand timed 10.6 was no fluke, with Bevis scoring a PB of 10.98 in finishing second. Victorian Shaun Hargreaves also posted a time quicker than the Open men, crossing in 11.11.

New South Welshman Matt Harris was next to cross in 11.36, ahead of the imposing form of giant young Kiwi Kieran Fowler (11.53). Bevis' training partner Nathan Trembath managed 11.67 while Luke Hallett would have been a little disappointed with his 12.34 clocking. However, his disappointment would have paled into insignificance beside that of Sandgroper Brandon Johnson who fell across the finish line clutching his hamstring. The injury was severe enough to put Johnson out for the rest of the Championship.

Only one event completed and already the field had been reduced to seven.

The long jump for the U20 men was conducted on the eastern side of the QSAC stadium. The heat of the Queensland summer's day was tempered somewhat by cloud cover, but every now and again, when the sun broke through the clouds, the athletes could feel the full sting of old Sol. John Lane hit the best mark in round one, with a new PB distance of 6.85m (wind +2.0). Close on his heels was fellow Queenslander Adam Bevis with 6.83m (+1.2). Hargreaves (6.56), Trembath (6.44) and Harris (6.38) all went beyond six metres with their first efforts. Hallett over-rotated a little in his take off and dropped his feet into the pit at 5.92m. Kieran Fowler took off a full metre before the board, and then ran through the pit to record only 3.74m.

In round 2, Hargreaves, reading the wind well, rode a following breeze of 3.1 m/s out to 6.92m. Lane and Bevis both fouled jumps that appeared to be in the seven metre range. Trembath improved 6.57m in this second stanza, but Hallett, Harris and Fowler all found the plasticine and failed to improve.

In round three, Bevis fouled another big one. Lane hit 6.76m – consistent, but no improvement. Trembath also hit 6.76m, but in contrast to Lane, this was a big PB, putting a huge smile on the lanky Queenslander's face. Harris and Hallett both improved – Harris to 6.41 and Hallett to 6.19. Hargreaves launched himself magnificently on his last attempt and looked certain to land well over the 7m mark, but inexplicably dropped his right foot into the pit about 40cm short of where the rest of his body first impacted the sand. His jump still measured a very reasonable 6.80m. A great opportunity lost.

Fowler was in the nervous position of having to get his foot on the board to garner some points from this discipline. He charged down the runway, but planted his right foot on top of the raised plasticine board, slipping awkwardly in the process. Not only had Fowler failed to gain any points, but he was taken to the nearby QEII hospital to have his foot checked for a possible fracture. The news wasn't good. Fowler had a suspected hairline fracture of his second tarsal, and would be unable to continue in the competition. Only two events completed and now the field had been reduced to six.

The leader board read

Lane 1675, Bevis 1639, Hargreaves 1631, Trembath 1474, Harris 1459, Hallett 1214.

In the absence of Fowler, it was expected that the shot put would be a lay down misere for Bevis, especially given that the strongly-built Harris was coming off an ankle injury to his right leg. In the event, Bevis did finish on top, but not before being handed a scare from Lane. Lane led through rounds one and two with his first round effort of 13.80m. Bevis hit 13.32m in the first round and 13.65m in the second. Lane, using a 'skip back' technique, hit a PB of 14.15m with his last attempt to apply further pressure to Bevis. However, true competitor that he is, Bevis responded with a big 14.47m put. Harris was next with 12.63m, ahead of Trembath (12.41), Hargreaves (11.51) and Hallett (10.17).

Lane maintained his lead narrowly from Bevis, while Harris snuck to within one point of Trembath.

Lane 2413, Bevis 2396, Hargreaves 2208, Trembath 2105, Harris 2104, Hallett 1710.

The high jump was next, known to be a strong event for Lane, but not so strong for Bevis. The three "H's", Hargreaves, Hallett and Harris had all posted jumps in excess of 1.80m in the past, but the ankle that Harris had damaged was in his take off leg, and this would work against him here. Harris entered early, at 1.50m and then, to give his foot a rest, passed every alternate height. He managed first up clearances at 1.50, 1.56 and 1.62, before needing two at 1.68m. Unfortunately his luck ran out at 1.74m, and he was the first to exit the competition. Training partners Trembath and Bevis both managed only 1.74, while Hargreaves was clear through 1.80m before failing thrice at 1.83m. Lane entered with a 'safety' jump at 1.74m, while Hallett waited until 1.77m. Lane and Hallett then had similar score sheets through the next few heights. Both needed two to negotiate 1.80m, but cleared 1.83m on first attempt, before each needed two at 1.89m. Hallett exited at 1.92m, while Lane cleared on his first for a new decathlon PB. 1.95m would equal his all-time PB. However, despite two of his three attempts being 'ankle-ticklers' the bar refused to stay on.

Lane 3144, Bevis 2973, Hargreaves 2835, Trembath 2682, Harris 2632, Hallett 2389.

In the last event of the day, the 400m, Hargreaves had the best time on paper with a 49.25 from the Victorian School's Championships in October. Harris' best this season was 49.45 from the NSW Schools Championships, also in October, and Lane had twice run 49.57 in decathlon competitions.

Harris got the worst of the lane draw, starting in lane 8, with Lane on his inside. Lane strode out strongly from the start, picking up the stagger on Harris after the first 100m. Hargreaves in lane 5 and Bevis in lane 6 took up the chase, with Hargreaves doing the better. Entering the main straight, Lane had about a half a metre on Hargreaves with Bevis a further seven metres back. Hargreaves tried hard to reel Lane in over the last 100m, but the distance between them remained virtually unchanged to the finish line. Lane stopped the clock at 49.29, his fifth decathlon PB for Day One. Hargreaves also earned good points for his strong 49.51 sec effort.

Bevis, lacking a little conditioning work following his enforced lay-off due to injury, managed 51.27. Trembath was next across the line in 52.33. Harris was very disappointed with his 55.55, quoted later as saying "I haven't run that slowly since primary school". Hallett finished in a sluggish 56.70.

At the conclusion of the first day's events, Lane had amassed an impressive 3992 points. Bevis trailed by 262 points on 3730, with Hargreaves still holding third on 3672. Trembath was only just short of 3400 points on 3392, while Harris had dropped off the pace, on 3209, but still well ahead of Hallett on 2921 points.

Day Two

Both Bevis and Hargreaves (and Harris when he was in shape) had demonstrated in the past that they could put together a strong day two, whereas Lane had a notoriously poor second day. It would be interesting to see how Lane fared when the others began their assault on his lead.

Bevis, Hargreaves and Harris had good hurdling credentials, while Lane was still a novice. The wind wasn't kind to the athletes, blowing into their faces at 1.4 m/s. As expected, Bevis was the slickest over the barriers, with Hargreaves in hot pursuit. Bevis was the only one to run sub-15 with a 14.75 second run, while Hargreaves was the only other athlete under 16 seconds (15.73). Lane (16.19), Hallett (16.69), Harris (16.85) and Trembath (16.92) all finished in a rush, with less than a second separating them.

In one quick effort, Bevis had reduced Lane's lead from over 250 points to less than 100. Hargreaves had also reduced his gap to the overnight leader from 320 points to 268. Harris had picked up only 7 points on Trembath.

Lane 4703, Bevis 4610, Hargreaves 4435, Trembath 4025, Harris 3849, Hallett 3578.

The discus was another event where Bevis was expected to excel. Trembath was also noted as quite a reasonable discus thrower but was stepping up to the 1.75kg weight. Harris also should not be so badly disadvantaged in this event by his injury. Hallett was not known as a strong thrower and Lane came into the competition with a PB of only 37.53m.

Bevis did pop out a few big throws, but unfortunately only managed to get his second throw measured. This effort, of 47.62m, was enough to win this particular competition. Harris also threw over forty metres, with a third round effort of 40.12m, but Lane was the surprise, throwing all three attempts beyond his previous PB. His best of 41.93m, a new PB by 4.4 metres came in the first round. Trembath threw a solid 38.40m, with Hargreaves not far behind on 38.14m, while Hallett struggled with all three of his attempts failing to reach thirty metres. His best throw (29.43m) was his first.

Bevis had finally bridged the gap to Lane. He now led the competition by 25 points. Hargreaves had, like the two lads ahead of him, passed the 5000 point mark, but had dropped further behind Lane. Harris had gained ground on Trembath but still trailed him by over 140 points. Hallett had passed 4000 points.

Bevis 5431, Lane 5407, Hargreaves 5062, Trembath 4657, Harris 4516, Hallett 4031.

In the pole vault, Trembath was the first to enter the competition at 3.00m. He had a 'hit and miss' series of attempts, as the bar was raised steadily by 10cm increments. By the time he had cleared 3.40m, Trembath had already taken ten attempts. 3.50m then proved beyond him.

Hargreaves was next to enter the competition, taking a 'settler' at 3.30m. He cleared easily on his first, and then passed to 3.50m. Harris, Bevis, Lane and Hallett all entered at 3.40m. Bevis was over on his first. Harris and Lane needed two. Hallett, despite having reasonably good credentials in this event, has had difficulties since he broke two poles at the ANQ Championships last September. He looked decidedly uncomfortable on his new pole, having difficulty in penetrating. He needed three attempts at his opening height, and three again when the bar was raised to 3.50m. Hargreaves and Lane cleared 3.50 at first try, while Bevis and Harris passed.

A 3.60m, Hargreaves, Bevis and Lane all sailed over cleanly on their first, while Harris took all three attempts. An unhappy Hallett missed all three attempts and exited the competition. Bevis and Lane cleared 3.70, while Harris and Hargreaves elected to pass. At 3.80m, Bevis' and Lane's competition was over, but Harris and Hargreaves were successful with their attempts, Hargreaves jumped at 3.90, but Harris, seeking to rest his sore ankle, opted to pass. Hargreaves bowed out at 3.90, leaving Harris the only remaining competitor at 4.00m. Unfortunately, he couldn't get his body over the bar, and his pole vault competition was also over.

Lane and Bevis maintained their same relative positions, twenty-four points apart, but Hargreaves gained back a few points on the leaders. Harris made a very useful dent in Trembath's lead over him. He earned 105 points more than Trembath in the pole vault, to move to within forty points of his Queensland rival.

Bevis 5966, Lane 5942, Hargreaves 5624, Trembath 5114, Harris 5078, Hallett 4513.

In the javelin Bevis, Harris and Hargreaves all brought 50m credentials to the competition. Trembath also had thrown the 700g implement over 50m, so he would be expected to throw the heavier 800g spear at least mid-forties. Hallett was not known for his strong throwing arm, with his javelins usually landing in the mid-thirty range. Lane had been working hard over the last several months to strengthen his shoulders. When throwing the javelin, his right shoulder had the disconcerting habit of 'popping out'. His PB, set at the Queensland U20 Championships in January was a meager 30.43m.

With the exception of Lane and Hallett, all lads threw reasonably close to their anticipated distance. Harris, despite the ankle problem, threw 50.96m, only about a metre shorter than he had thrown at the NSW Schools Championships last October. Bevis had a throw of 50.19m, bracketed by two fouls. Hargreaves' and Trembath's best throws (of 49.13m and 44.23m respectively) also came in the second round. Lane threw caution to the wind and hurled a big PB in the first round of 35.81m. In the second round, he surprised even his coach when he added a further five and a half metres to this effort, lofting the spear past forty metres (41.22). Unfortunately, he was left clutching the back of his shoulder in pain, and subsequently passed his third round attempt. Lane had torn his teres major muscle, and was strapped up by the First Aid attendant. Hallett also exceeded expectations, hitting 35.33m on his first, improving to 37.78m on his second and finally nailing 40.59m on his last.

Bevis had now moved past 6500 points, leaving his hopes alive for another World Junior qualifier. Lane had managed to hold onto second, but Hargreaves had cut Lane's lead from 318 points down to 202. Harris had caught and passed Trembath (by 63 points), while Hallett was closing in on 5000 points.

Bevis 6557, Lane 6402, Hargreaves 6200, Harris 5681, Trembath 5618, Hallett 4964.

When the final event arrived, Bevis was needing 523 points (or 4:54.38) to achieve the WJ standard. Lane, with damaged shoulder, would need to run a four second PB of 4:55.23 to reach 7000 points. Hargreaves was on target to score a new PB (and possibly catch Lane for the silver). Harris would need to finish no worse than eleven seconds behind Trembath to hold onto fourth, and Hallett would need to run 5:04.25 or better to reach 5500 points. The stage was set. The players stood up to the starting line, all with their own personal challenges. The gun was fired and they were off!

Hargreaves, with a PB of sub 4:30 made the early running with Lane leading the rest of the pack through the first 300m. As the race progressed Hargreaves moved relentlessly away from the field, but his pace indicated that he would be well off the 4:30 mark, probably closer to 4:45. With 400m to go, Hargreaves knuckled down and put in a strong effort. He was rewarded with a time of 4:40.32, which gave him 678 points for a new PB total of 6878. Would this be enough to catch Lane? Four of the remaining five had managed to stay in relatively close contact but Harris, obviously troubled, dropped further and further behind the field. First Hallett, then Trembath passed Lane. Bevis, who had run sub-4:45 at the Gold Coast in November, was obviously feeling the effects of the injury-enforced lack of training time on the track over the November to January period. He dug deep to try to stay as close as possible to Lane. The track side clock ticked past five minutes just before Hallett arrived. His 5:03.42 ensured that he would reach 5500 points for a new under 20 PB. Trembath was next in 5:05.34, just ahead of Lane in 5:06.92. Bevis hauled his heavy legs over the line in 5:09.39.

Lane had just missed his 7000 points by just 77 points. Bevis had just missed another WJ qualifier by only 26 points. Would Trembath have enough lead over Harris to snatch back fourth? Looking back down the track it was obvious that he would. Harris was struggling valiantly in a lost cause. He eventually crossed in 5:36.67, winning no medals and no PBs, but winning a lot of fans for his grit and determination in the face of adversity. Harris, the only other athlete in the field to have scored over 7000 points this season, was a long way off that form in scoring just over 6000 points but hopefully he'll be back in shape after a solid winter preparation.

Hargreaves may have taken small consolation from the fact that his score in placing third was the highest bronze-medal tally in the twenty-one years of the staging of the under 20 championships.

Bevis 7064, Lane 6923, Hargreaves 6878, Trembath 6147, Harris 6048, Hallett 5504.