

**Queensland Open U23 & U20 Combined Events Championships**  
**Gold Coast City Athletics Track**  
**25<sup>th</sup>- 26<sup>th</sup> January 2008**

by Peter Hannan

**Open, U23 & U20 Women's Heptathlon**

The Qld Combined Events Championships for Open U23 and U20 were once again held on the Gold Coast. The Bureau of Meteorology had forecast showers for both Friday and Saturday of the Australia Day long weekend, but the predicted precipitation fortunately did not eventuate. The format of an evening competition for Day One, then an afternoon competition for Day Two was chosen to try to avoid, at least partially, the Queensland summer heat. However, the choice also meant that the final track events of the night (200m for the women and 400m for the men) were held after 9pm at night. Many of the competitors would never before have experienced the requirement to be explosive at that time of the evening.

There were six entrants for the Open & U23 Women's heptathlon, and two for the U20 women.

The Open & U23 competition featured the experienced heptathlete from NSW, Jessica Fisher, who had placed sixth at the 2007 edition of the Australian Championships in January 2007 with a score of 4701. Challenging Fisher would be a trio of up and coming under 23 Queensland athletes – Rebecca Robinson and Emma Capell (both from the University of Queensland) and Ashleigh Reid (University of Sunshine Coast). Also thrown into the mix would be Gold Coaster Rosanna Doolan, and Masters athlete Julie Brims, representing QE2 Track Club.

The U20 title would be fought out between Club mates and training partners Jay Affleck and Fan Li, both of Gold Coast Victory Club.

**Day One**

Day One started, as always, with the 100m hurdles. Ashleigh Reid had a great run over the barriers, recording a new PB of 14.82 in dipping under 15 seconds for the first time. Pushing Reid all the way was Rebecca Robinson (15.35) with Fisher close behind her in 15.67. Emma Capell was next to cross. Her time of 16.32 was exactly one full second faster than she had run at the Queensland Invitational heptathlon back in November at the same track. Julie Brims, a Masters athlete in the 40 – 44 age group, is more used to running hurdles over a shorter distance (80m) at a lower height (76cm) with an 8m spacing. However she still managed to knock over a couple of the younger girls by recording 17.92 ahead of Li (18.04), Doolan (19.00) and Affleck (19.04).



**Women's hurdles field.**

From left: Fan Li, Julie Brims (partly obscured), Jessica Fisher, Jay Affleck, Rosanna Doolan, Emma Capell (obscured), Ashleigh Reid.

*Photo courtesy of Peter Edwards, "Sporting Focus." [www.sportingfocus.com.au](http://www.sportingfocus.com.au)*

Reid and Fisher, both with PBs over 1.70m were expected to battle it out for the honours in the high jump. Such proved to be the case. One by one the other competitors dropped from the competition. Doolan was first to go, with a best of 1.39m. Brims was next on 1.42m, with Li and Robinson going one increment better with 1.45m. Affleck managed 1.54m despite experiencing patellar tendon soreness, and Capell exited having cleared 1.57m.

This left just Reid and Fisher. Reid, quite a respectable high jumper, cleared 1.72m and had some reasonable attempts at 1.75m, but failed to negotiate that height. Fisher, however, looking stronger and better conditioned than the last time I had seen her, was having a bit of a 'purple patch'. Demonstrating an impressive aggressive run up, she successfully negotiated a new lifetime PB of 1.78m to earn a very valuable 953 points.



**Jessica Fisher**



**Ashleigh Reid**

*Photos courtesy of Peter Edwards, "Sporting Focus". [www.sportingfocus.com.au](http://www.sportingfocus.com.au)*

Reid retained a narrow overall lead with 1745 points to Fisher's 1708. Capell (1377) had moved slightly ahead of club-mate Robinson (1362). Masters athlete Julie Brims impressed many of the knowledgeable coaches by managing 1000-plus points already in her first heptathlon competition. Doolan, on 892 points would have been very pleased to be 165 points up on her score at the same stage in her last heptathlon outing on the Gold Coast back in November.

In the U20 competition, the Gold Coast Victory team mates were locked close together with only three points separating Affleck (1053) and Li (1050).

The shot put promised to see a move from both Fisher and Robinson. Fisher had thrown 10.35m at last year's National Championships, while Robinson was capable of throwing in the high 11's. None of the other competitors was expected, on past form, to exceed the ten metre line, although Reid had thrown 9.50m at the Gold Coast Invitational in November, and had apparently produced some good throws recently on the training paddock.

The ladies produced a mixed bag of results from the concrete circle. Robinson did indeed exceed 11 metres, but her 11.50m was slightly down on the 11.89m she had thrown at the ANQ Championships in Townsville back in late September. Fisher would have been happy to lob the steel ball out to 10.63m, but Reid didn't fire, producing a best effort of only 8.65m.



**Rebecca Robinson**



**Jessica Fisher**

*Photos courtesy of Peter Edwards, "Sporting Focus". [www.sportingfocus.com.au](http://www.sportingfocus.com.au)*

There was almost nothing between Li, Capell and Doolan, who threw 8.38, 8.37 and 8.36 respectively. The diminutive Brims showed she has a bit of power in her small frame, hitting 7.87m, while the ever-smiling Affleck had even more reason to smile when she threw a PB of 7.82m. Reid (2186) had now surrendered her lead to Fisher (2279). Robinson (1990) had moved closer to Reid and would be looking forward to the last event of Day One, a relatively strong one for her, the 200m. Capell (1800), Brims (1422) and Doolan (1315) were all on target for new PBs.

In the U20 competition, Li (1474) had regained the lead from Affleck (1441), but recent training form indicated that Affleck would once again challenge for the lead in the 200m.

The 200m got under way just after 9pm AEST. The track had cooled. The south-easterlies blew into the face of the runners for the first 100m, and would provide only limited assistance as they blew across the track down the main straight. The athletes would also carry some residual fatigue into the half-lapper. Conditions would not be conducive to fast times. However, the racing promised to be fierce. Anyone who had seen Brims competing in Masters and open competitions during the last season would know that she would provide stiff opposition to her younger rivals.

Brims ran from the outside lane, so she did not 'get the look' on her opponents until they entered the straight, Robinson had worked hard into the breeze for the first 100m, and had a narrow lead over Brims as they turned for home. Neither gave or took an inch as they raced for home, and Robinson held her advantage to cross the line in 26.01, just ahead of Brims in 26.17. Behind the leading two, Reid and Fisher were waging their own battle. Reid showed the results of an improved dedication and application to training by recording a heptathlon PB of 27.01, holding out Fisher who finished in 27.70. Doolan (28.30), Capell (28.52) and Affleck (28.81) had their own three-way tussle, while Li trailed the field in 30.58.

After an absorbing Day One, Fisher led the field with 2934, more than 100 points up on her performance at the 207 Open Nationals. By virtue of her heptathlon PB in the 200m, Reid (2897) had managed to stave off the challenge of Robinson (2786) for the time being. Reid's Day One total was 23 points up on her previous PB. Capell held down a clear third on 2390, ahead of Brims (2204) and Doolan (1922), who was almost 250 points up on her previous PB.

In the U20s, Affleck had snuck past 2000 with 2009 points, while Li had lost more ground, sitting on 1916.

## Day Two

Day Two saw the ladies report to their long jump on a very warm Gold coast afternoon. Sunshine Coaster Reid reveled in the conditions, setting a new heptathlon PB of 5.55m. Fisher, in contrast, struggled. She found the swirling winds difficult to read, and had trouble getting her foot on the board. Her best valid attempt of 4.68m would have been very disappointing for her, and threw a bit of a spanner in the works of her fine heptathlon so far. Robinson was the only athlete other than Reid to jump past five metres with a best of 5.33m.

Brims also had trouble on the runway and fouled her first two attempts. She had to do a 'clutch attempt' on her third, and managed to put one in at 4.89m. Affleck (4.82m) and Capell (4.70m) also exceeded 4.50m.



**Emma Capell**

*Photos courtesy of Peter Edwards, "Sporting Focus". [www.sportingfocus.com.au](http://www.sportingfocus.com.au)*



**Julie Brims**

Fan Li's 4.40m was better than her two previous outings in heptathlon. Rosanna Doolan jumped a below-par 3.85m on her first attempt, but feeling tightness in her right adductor, she decided that discretion was the best plan at this stage of the competition and passed her remaining attempts.



**Fan Li**

*Photos courtesy of Peter Edwards, "Sporting Focus". [www.sportingfocus.com.au](http://www.sportingfocus.com.au)*

Fisher (3408) had dropped to third behind Reid (3612) and Robinson (3437). Capell (2869) was still well on target for a new PB, with Brims edging a little closer to her on 2734. Despite the glitch of the long jump, Doolan was also still in the hunt for a PB, sitting just shy of 2200 points on 2196. In the U20s, Affleck (2520) had moved a little further away again from Li (2319).

Now to the spear throw. Would Fisher be able to respond after the disappointment of the long jump? A forty metre plus thrower, Fisher would be hoping for a throw in this range to resurrect her competition. However, she could expect a challenge from Robinson who, on a good day, is capable of throws in the high 30 metre range.

Under the tutelage of well-known Queensland coach Mike Frawley, Reid had shown improvement into the thirty metre range. Capell and Affleck are also capable of thirty metre-plus throws, but the soreness in Affleck's right knee might hamper her ability to execute a decent jump stride. Li and Doolan would be hoping to challenge the twenty metre line, while Brims was an unknown quantity in this particular event.

Once the competition got under way, Fisher did indeed produce a throw over forty metres, with her 40.76m best, being a little short of her 42.21 from last year's Nationals, but almost nine metres better than the next best athlete, Reid, whose 31.96 was a little down on her heptathlon PB (33.03). Robinson's 'middle of the road' meet continued with her best being only 30.72, well short of her PB. Capell's 28.53m was a couple of metres down on the 30.63m she threw at the Australian University Games in September. Affleck's dicky knee did indeed hamper her performance, as she managed only a relatively disappointing 28.74m. However, Doolan (19.60) and Li (23.90) threw heptathlon PBs, while Brims established an inaugural heptathlon PB of 22.08m.

**Pictured right: Jessica Fisher**

*Photo courtesy of Peter Edwards, "Sporting Focus"*  
[www.sportingfocus.com.au](http://www.sportingfocus.com.au)



With six disciplines complete, the competitions had reached a most interesting stage. In the Open & U23 competition, Reid (4126) still led the competition from Fisher (4090) and Robinson (3927). Capell (3318) sat comfortably in the gap between Robinson and Brims (3062) while Doolan on 2477 rounded out the field.

However, Reid was not noted for running the 800m well, having a PB of over 2 min 50 sec, while both Robinson and Fisher could run sub 2:30. Doolan also has been known to run in the 2:30 range, and Brims was reported to be capable of something in the 2:35 to 2:45 category. Capell on the other hand had yet to break 3 minutes in a heptathlon. Based on best recent performances, Robinson was a 345 point better 800m runner than Reid, and Fisher was 251 points better. With a buffer of only 26 points over Fisher and 199 points over Robinson, the situation looked rather dire for Reid. She would either have to run a huge PB, or hope for disastrous efforts from Fisher and Robinson (or both scenarios) to have any hope of retaining her lead. Capell, for her part, would also have to be on her game, to avoid having Brims overtake her and snatch the 'third-placed Queenslander' position. Doolan was probably just a little too far off the pace at this stage to become a factor in the overall equation.

In the U20 competition, Jay Affleck (2973) held a lead of almost 300 points over Fan Li (2681), but Li's heptathlon best for the 800m was over 480 points better than Affleck's. Affleck would have to do something outstanding to retain her grip on the gold.

The gun was fired, and immediately Fisher moved to the lead. Robinson slotted in behind her and then moved into the lead down the back straight. Doolan slotted in a couple of strides behind, with Li a few strides behind Doolan. These remained the relative positions through 400m, 500m and 600m. About twenty metres adrift of this lead pack, Brims held about a fifteen metre lead over Reid, with a similar gap back to Affleck. Capell was left to run her own race alone at the rear of the field.

Pictured (from left): Doolan, Reid (partly obscured), Li (obscured behind Brims), Brims, Affleck (obscured behind Fisher), Fisher and Robinson



*Photo courtesy of Peter Edwards, "Sporting Focus". [www.sportingfocus.com.au](http://www.sportingfocus.com.au)*

With about 200m to go, Robinson began her long drive for home. She moved away from Fisher, who clung grimly to her task of trying to stay as close as possible to Robinson. Doolan, in turn, tried to chase down Fisher, moving out into lane 2 in the straight. Robinson held on to record 2:24.65, two seconds ahead of Fisher (2:26.59), with Doolan another one and a half seconds behind Fisher (2:28.33). Brims was about the length of the straight behind Doolan crossing in 2:43.62. Behind her, Reid produced the fastest finish she has managed in all her heptathlons to date. For the first time, she snuck under 2:50, clocking 2:49.22. Possibly inspired by Reid, Affleck was also pushing the limits of her pain barrier, running a time almost 25 seconds better than her previous heptathlon best.

The answers to the remaining questions would now be found in the IAAF Combined Events Scoring Tables Handbook. Had Reid done enough to hold off Fisher and Robinson? Had Brims managed to catch Capell? Had Li done enough to overtake her team mate Affleck?

In the final wash, the visitor from NSW, Jessica Fisher, was announced the overall winner, with a score of 4826. Had she not faltered in the long jump, it is quite likely that she would have scored in excess of 5000 points.

The first Queenslander was Rebecca Robinson. Her fine 800m had been enough to hold out the late charge from Ashleigh Reid. Robinson's tally of 4688 was a little less than 70 points short of her PB, but Reid had improved her PB by over 120 points, totaling 4598 points. Capell, with 3617 points, improved her PB by over 150 points and held onto third spot ahead of Julie Brims, who posted her first heptathlon PB of 3594. The relatively inexperienced Doolan fell just short of adding a whopping 300 points to her previous heptathlon best – surely encouraging for future application to this most challenging athletic event.

Affleck's huge improvement in the 800m had proved enough to deflect Li's challenge in the U20 competition. She held on for the win with a PB total of 3387 points, ahead of Li's own PB of 3317. Affleck confided on the victory dais that this was her first gold medal since first becoming involved in track and field competition. Maybe it is just that she has finally found her event?

The 2008 version of the Championships had once again been a most intriguing affair with personal competitions within the competition. Many PBs were set, both in individual performances and in overall tallies.

The stage will be set for the great competition to be resumed at the Nationals in a few weeks' time.



**Womens Open &U23 competitors**

From left: Julie Brims, Ashleigh Reid, Jessica Fisher, Rebecca Robinson, Emma Capell, Rosanna Doolan



**Happy U20 medallists**

Fan Li, Jay Affleck

Photos courtesy of Peter Edwards, "Sporting Focus". [www.sportingfocus.com.au](http://www.sportingfocus.com.au)



The heptathlon competitors sign each others score sheets after the conclusion of the event

Photo courtesy of Peter Edwards, "Sporting Focus". [www.sportingfocus.com.au](http://www.sportingfocus.com.au)