

**Australian U15 – U19 & U23 Combined Events Championships**  
**Domain Athletics Centre, Hobart**  
**January 31 – February 1, 2009**  
**Report by Peter Hannan**  
**(Athletics Australian National Youth Event Coach Combined Events)**

Tasmania had enjoyed (is endured a better word?) record heat-wave conditions in the couple of days leading into the U15 to U19 and U23 Combined Events Championships. However, on Friday evening at the Briggs Athletics Classic meet, the high temperatures disappeared, and spectators were reaching for their jumpers, long trousers or blankets. The actual air temperature was probably in the high teens or low twenties, but the cool breeze added a wind chill factor which seemed to bring the temperature down into the lower teens.

The same sort of conditions greeted the combined eventers on the first day of their competition. A telling difference for the CE athletes was that the wind direction was not the gentle following breeze that had assisted the athletes on the night before. They had a wind in their face from the left quarter for the bulk of the day. This affected the 100m times for the decathletes and the sprint hurdle times for the heptathletes.

Temperatures stayed relatively cool for most of Day One, with a short, sprinkling shower early in the proceedings just to add an extra element. The wind dropped later in the afternoon, bringing slightly warmer temperatures and better conditions for the 400m at the end of the day.



**The Domain Athletics Centre, Hobart**  
*Photo courtesy of Margaret Hender*

While there were several non-starters from the original list of 45 athletes registered to compete, there were also some late entries, bringing the total back up to 43 (17 males and 26 females).

## **Males:**

### U16 heptathlon.

While this had promised to be a competition between the three "J's" – Jake Grevsmuhl, Jake Stein and Jack Bangel, Stein was unable to participate when his Little Athletics Zone Championships fell on the same weekend. He had to compete at his Zones in order to be eligible to compete at his LA's State Championships and made the decision to withdraw from this event.

In his absence, Queenslander Grevsmuhl gave a dominant display against his sole opponent, Jack Bangel from New South Wales. Grevsmuhl took out the 100 hurdles in a slick time of 13.93 into a 1.8m/s head wind. Bangel managed a solid 14.27 in second, but was left 44 points behind Grevsmuhl on the points tally.

In the high jump, Bangel cleared 1.57m, but Grevsmuhl scaled 1.78m to extend his lead to 213 points. Admittedly, Grevsmuhl's path to 1.78m wasn't all smooth sailing. He needed two attempts at 1.72, three at 1.75 and another three at 1.78.

This lead was extended still further in the shot, with the Queenslander hitting 13.30m in comparison with Bangel's 10.87m. 361 points now separated the two lads.

In the 200m, Bangel produced his fourth solid effort, running 24.15 with a gentle following breeze of 0.9m/s. But once again, Grevsmuhl performed even better, stopping the clock at 23.40s.

At the end of Day One, Grevsmuhl had amassed an impressive 3028 points from his four events, while Bangel was just one point shy of 2600 points.

Day Two commenced with the long jump, and once again Grevsmuhl was to the fore. All three of his attempts were over six metres, with his best measuring 6.42m with a slight following breeze of 0.2m/s. In contrast, Bangel's best was only 5.50m with a 1.5 following wind. This added almost 200 points to Grevsmuhl's lead.

After five events: Grevsmuhl 3707 Bangel 3081

Bangel kept within 28 points of Grevsmuhl in the javelin, throwing 38.96m to Grevsmuhl's 40.86m. However, going into the final event, the 1500m, Jake G (4162) held a 654 point lead over Jack B (3508).

In the 1500m however, Bangel came into his own. He set off from the gun and Grevsmuhl, appearing to be carrying a slight injury, was unable to respond. At each circuit of the track Bangel extended his lead, every stride eating away at Grevsmuhl's lead. The task was herculean, but Bangel was giving it his best shot. He eventually crossed the line about 150m ahead of Grevsmuhl. His time, 5:01.75, was outside his best, but by now Grevsmuhl was only jogging. He eventually reached the finish post in 6:04.29. Bangel had regained more than 300 points, but Grevsmuhl's early performances meant that his position in first was unassailable.

Jake Grevsmuhl was announced the winner of the U16 National Championships with a score of 4409. In second place, Jack Bangel had snuck past 4000 points with his score of 4057.

### U17 decathlon.

The U17 boys were the only group to enjoy a tail wind in their first event – gentle puff of 0.2m/s for their 100m.

Queenslander Kade Jennings took the honours in 11.65 from his State compatriot Lindsay Newton-Smith (11.70). The long lean frame of Sandgroper Morgan Ward, a tad short of 2 metres tall, crossed next in a tick over 12 seconds (12.09). Tasmanians Ben Gittus and Josh Zeitzen (a first timer) crossed at the line together and were awarded the same time of 12.54s.

The long jump results almost exactly mirrored the 100m placings – Jennings 6.34m, Newton-Smith 6.16m, Ward 5.78m, Gittus 5.12m, Zeitzen 4.81m.

Jennings made it three from three in the shot, landing the steel ball at 12.57m. This time however, it was Ward who was closest, using his great height of release (and surprising strength from such a slight frame) to push the implement out to 12.50m. Newton-Smith maintained contact with an 11.20m throw. Gittus once again led the battle of the Apple Islanders, throwing 8.39m to Zeitzen's 7.30m.

In the high jump, Ward nailed his first individual victory clearing an impressive 1.90m. Jennings and Newton-Smith were once again close, but Jennings (1.81) again got the nod over Newton-Smith (1.78). Ward's fine effort had moved him into second behind Newton-Smith. Gittus (1.72) moved further ahead of Zeitzen (1.57) but was still losing ground on the leaders.

Jennings 2659, Ward 2524, Newton-Smith 2500, Gittus 1903, Zeitzen 1661.

In the 400m, Newton-Smith displayed his speed endurance qualities taking out his first individual event with a strong run of 53.42s. He was followed home by Jennings (55.29) and Gittus (55.95).

Ward, suffering from thigh soreness struggled home in 58.23, just ahead of Zeitzen (58.42).

After one day's battle, Jennings led the field on 3246, 82 ahead of Newton-Smith, who had reclaimed second place on 3164. Ward held third place on 2999. Gittus (2464) still had the wood on Zeitzen (2130).

In the first event of Day Two, Jennings was first out of the blocks and first to the first hurdle. Running into a 0.9m/s wind, Jennings held his form and led through the fifth hurdle by more than two metres. At this stage his form dropped off a bit, and Lindsay Newton-Smith and Morgan Ward began to move up slowly. However, Jennings was able to maintain sufficient speed and form to hold out his faster finishing opponents. He crossed the line in 16.46. Ward (16.90) managed to snare Newton-Smith (16.97) right on the line. Zeitzen (19.52) managed to snare his first individual victory over Gittus (20.19) for the competition, but they maintained their relative positions on the table.

Jennings 3928, Newton-Smith 3791, Ward 3634, Gittus 2798, Zeitzen 2518

In the discus, the wheels on the Jennings machine began to look a little wobbly. He threw a below par 29.05m, giving away ground to both Newton-Smith (32.24) and the lean but long-levered Ward (33.79). Gittus maintained his dominance over fellow Tasmanian Zeitzen throwing 27.21m to Zeitzen's 22.78m.

Jennings 4374, Newton-Smith 4300, Ward 4174, Gittus 3208, Zeitzen 2843

In the pole vault the U17 and U18 age groups jumped together. At the lower heights there were some very unusual techniques demonstrated. Various athletes cleared the bar with their back to the bar, or landed in the pit doing a front-on body slam. Some of the Tasmanian athletes shared a 'one size fits all' pole. It certainly kept the crowd entertained, and fortunately no one was hurt, despite some decidedly 'agricultural' techniques. Gittus and Zeitzen entered at 1.80m, passed 1.90m and then cleared both 2.00m and 2.10m. Gittus bowed out at 2.20m, but Zeitzen continued through 2.30m, before finally bowing out at 2.40m. At this height, both Newton-Smith and Jennings entered the competition. Newton-Smith was successful on his first while Jennings needed two. Both lads passed 2.50m. Jennings jumped again at 2.60m and once again needed two attempts. At 2.70m, both Newton-Smith and Jennings cleared on their first. Newton-Smith passed again at 2.80m, but Jennings opted to jump. Unfortunately, this height proved beyond him on the day. Newton-Smith cleared 2.90m on his first, but exited the competition at 3.00m. Ward, possibly protecting his sore thigh, passed until the bar was raised to 3.20m. He took two attempts to clear, and then needed three at 3.30m, before bowing out at 3.40m. Newton-Smith had pegged back almost another 50 points from Jennings' lead, now sitting only 27 points behind the leader, while Ward moved to within 30 points of Newton-Smith.

Jennings 4660 Newton-Smith 4633 Ward 4605 Gittus 3367 Zeitzen 3042

While Jennings is a reasonable javelin thrower, this event is one of Newton-Smith's fortes. Jennings managed a very reasonable 47.14m, but Newton-Smith launched the spear out to 58.72m, gaining 719 points and the lead in the competition for the first time. Ward, who would be described by his cricketing team mates as a "tall, left arm quick", also showed he was no slouch with the spear, landing one at 51.75m. Gittus (36.50) and Zeitzen (33.84) rounded out the competition.

Jennings had suddenly dropped from leader into third place!

Newton-Smith 5352 Ward 5220 Jennings 5206 Gittus 3759 Zeitzen 3396

Jennings could probably read the writing on the wall as he prepared for the 1500m. In all of their previous meetings, Newton-Smith had proved superior in the distance event. Would he be able to reverse that trend? Would the 'unknown quantity', Ward, prove dangerous over three and three quarter laps?

Once again the U17 and U18 age groups ran together. Newton-Smith took the early lead, and held it until the 1300m mark. Tucked in behind him was Ben Gittus. With 200m to go, Gittus made his move and began a long drive for home. Newton-Smith endeavoured to go with him, but was unable to maintain contact. However, Gittus was dragging him through to a fine performance. Back in the field, Jennings was trying to stay as close to Newton-Smith as possible, and as far ahead of Ward as he could manage. Ward was having his own problems. At the back of the field he was slowly circulating the oval with a slow, galloping gait. His main goal was obviously just to finish.

Gittus took the honours in this particular discipline, crossing the line in 4:43.61. Newton-Smith was not far behind in 4:44.93. Jennings 'hung in there' to record 5:06.88, ahead of Zeitzen (5:27.10). Ward continued his painful journey, and managed to reach the finish in 6:15.78, still enough to earn points.

When the final points had been tallied, Newton-Smith had managed to just sneak past 6000 points with his score of 6002. Jennings had fought back for second with 5727 points, while Ward had held on for third (5423). Ben Gittus (4417) won the battle of the Tasmanians over Josh Zeitzen (3810).

#### U18 decathlon.

The U18 decathlon always promised to be a three-way tussle between the two Westfields Sports High team mates Andrew Neville and Bradley Sharne, and the talented Victorian Luke Smith. Three late entries from Tasmania thrown into the mix – Joshua Mason, Johnny Riley and Ben Robertson added local interest to the contest.

As expected the three favourites crossed the line first in the 100m – Neville (11.73), Sharne (11.75) and Smith (12.16). However, Mason was very close to the pace with his time of 12.23. Riley (12.71) and Robertson (13.05) gave away early points to the leaders.

In the long jump, Smith (6.64m) threw out the first challenge to the New South Welshmen, taking the event from Neville (6.50) and Sharne (6.07). Mason (5.63) was once again the best of the Tasmanians. Neither Riley (4.95) nor Robertson (4.68) could manage a five metre effort.

In the shot, Smith launched another challenge for supremacy, taking out the event with a strong throw of 12.98m. Sharne, also no mug in the throwing events, was not far behind on 12.77m. The leaner frame of Neville could push the metal sphere no further than 11.48m, handing the overall lead to Smith for the first time. Robertson was, for the first time, the best of the Tasmanians in an individual event, tossing 10.79m to edge out Mason (10.71) and score big points on Riley (7.77).

Scores after three - Smith 2015, Neville 1977, Sharne 1956, Mason 1642, Robertson 1315, Riley 1244.

Neville, with some great performances in the high jump at both the Pacific School Games and Australian Youth Olympic Festival, was expected to dominate this event. While jumping relatively poorly by his standards, Neville still took out the event with a best leap of 1.96m. Mason was second with 1.75m ahead of Smith (1.72), Sharne and Riley both cleared 1.63m while Robertson could muster only 1.54m. With the high jump being a high scoring event, Neville jumped back into the lead on 2744, almost 170 points clear of Smith 2575, with Sharne just over 130 points further back on 2444. Mason led the local battle with 2227 points while Robertson (1734) and Riley (1732) were closely locked together at the tail of the field.

The 400m saw Sharne demonstrate one of his stronger events. With his soccer background, he demonstrated a greater lactic acid tolerance than his competitors and won the one lap contest in 52.83 seconds, just over two seconds ahead of Smith (54.88). Neville was not far behind in 55.24s, ahead of Mason (57.14), Riley (58.73) and a struggling Robertson (63.18).

At the end of Day One, Neville (3333) held a solid lead over Smith (3179), with Sharne lurking very close (3133). Mason was next best on 2743, well clear of Riley (2189) and Robertson (2045).

Day Two commenced with the 110 hurdles. While the weather was clear it was once again cool, and the wind still showed the athletes no favours, offering a 0.9 m/s head wind to the hurdlers. Neville displayed his superior hurdling skills, showing a clean pair of heels to his opponents. He crossed the line in 15.09s, more than 1.5 seconds clear of second-placed Bradley Sharne who, despite the conditions, managed a PB of 16.69. The short frame of Victorian Luke Smith made it difficult for him to maintain a three-stride pattern throughout. He managed well to about half-way, and then had to chop down to a five-stride rhythm. This inevitably slowed his forward speed and he eventually reached the finish line in 18.43. The three Tasmanians, Riley (18.72), Mason (19.52) and Robertson (20.09) were obviously not coming from a hurdling background, but managed to negotiate the barriers without incident or injury.

Neville had extended his lead to 4172 points. Sharne (3790) reversed his position with Smith (3663) on the ladder, moving into second place. Mason (3131) maintained a strong grip on third, while Riley (2646) and Robertson (2387) maintained their positions in fifth and sixth respectively.

In the discus, Sharne took the honours with a throw of 42.15m. This was probably as expected given his discus-throwing credentials. What was a little more of a surprise was to see Andrew Neville (35.48) hold out Victorian Luke Smith (35.36). Riley (31.25) continued to pursue fellow Tasmanian Joshua Mason (28.98), while Robertson sought to keep in touch throwing 30.40m.

Neville 4745, Sharne 4498, Smith 4234, Mason 3575, Riley 3135, Robertson 2859

In the pole vault, the Tasmanian Ben Robertson was the first to be eliminated, failing at 2.20m after earlier clearances at 1.80m, 2.00m and 2.10m. Fellow Taswegian Joshua Mason was the next to follow, with a best of 2.30m. Bradley Sharne and Johnny Riley could both manage only 2.50m. Victorian Luke Smith commenced his competition at 2.70m and had successful clearances at all heights through 3.00m, before exiting at 3.10m. Andrew Neville entered the competition at 3.00m, cleared on his first and then passed to 3.20m. He required two attempts at this height before passing again at 3.30m. Unfortunately 3.40m proved too much of 'an ask' on the day.

Neville 5151 Sharne 4740 Smith 4591 Mason 3774 Riley 3377 Robertson 3018

As a javelin thrower, Victorian Luke Smith had the best credentials coming into this event. He did, indeed, win the competition, but was probably rather disappointed that his winning effort hadn't flown farther than 54.35m. Andrew Neville was only three metres behind with his 51.24m. Tasmanian Mason demonstrated a good arm with his 46.84m effort, while Bradley Sharne (44.75) and Ben Robertson (40.72) also produced reasonable efforts. Johnny Riley opened the door slightly for his team mate Ben Robertson to attempt to climb off the bottom of the ladder when he could muster only a 36.56m throw.

Neville 5758 Sharne 5251 Smith 5244 Mason 4316 Riley 3770 Robertson 3471

With such a huge lead going into the 1500m, Andrew Neville would effectively need to score zero points in order for Bradley Sharne to catch him. Even though Neville was certainly not noted as a 1500m performer, he was uninjured, so he should be able to finish – probably in the 5:20 to 5:25 range based on his past two decathlons.

Of greater interest was whether Luke Smith, only 7 points behind Sharne at this stage, could finish a little over a second in front of Sharne in order to snare the silver.

The U17 and U18 boys ran together, and from early on, the younger U17 athletes took the lead. Queenslander Lindsay Newton-Smith went straight to the front, with Tasmanian Ben Gittus shadowing him. In the following pack, Smith stayed in front of Sharne for just over 400m, but as the field travelled down the back straight for the second time, Sharne threw down the challenge by moving past Smith. While Smith did his best to stay close to Sharne, Sharne was a man on a mission. He extended his lead over Smith with each lap, looking more comfortable as the race progressed. In fact with 200m to go, when Ben Gittus overtook Newton-Smith and sprinted for home, Bradley Sharne had moved up to within a few metres of Lindsay Newton-Smith. While Lindsay was trying to chase down Ben, Bradley had his sights on Lindsay. Half way down the main straight the blond-headed Queenslander felt the presence of another athlete looming up on his outside. Glancing over his right shoulder, he saw the dark-haired New South Welshman at full throttle a couple of metres behind. The shock seemed to add a last burst of adrenalin and, throwing his head back like a horse turned for home, Lindsay held out the strong, late challenge from Sharne. Sharne crossed in a new PB of 4:45.50.

Luke Smith had long since given up the battle to challenge to catch Sharne, and was content to finish as strongly as his energy reserves would allow and try to hold onto the bronze position. What of Andrew Neville? From the gun, he had dropped to the back of the field. His pace was slow, but he kept his hips high – always a good sign for a decathlete in this discipline. Even though the bulk of the field kept moving further away from him with every lap, he maintained form, and showed promise of running quite a deal quicker than the 5:20+ time expected of him. By keeping good form, he moved past another couple of runners - first Mason and then Smith.

Tasmanians Robertson (4:53.11) and Riley (4:43.13) had finished next behind Sharne in a blanket finish. Somewhat surprisingly, Andrew Neville was in the main straight as they crossed the line. When he eventually reached the finish, he looked at the track side clock and gave a little left-handed fist pump. In what had been, for him, a rather ordinary outing in a decathlon, he had finally scored a PB – by about 15 seconds! Joshua Mason struggled home in 5:18.20, followed by a very tired Luke Smith (5:21.40)

The final points were announced as the lads went out to the podium to receive their medals and the applause of the small crowd.

1<sup>st</sup> Andrew Neville 6287; 2<sup>nd</sup> Bradley Sharne 5897; 3<sup>rd</sup> Luke Smith 5687;  
4<sup>th</sup> Joshua Mason 4775; 5<sup>th</sup> Ben Robertson 4370; 6<sup>th</sup> Johnny Riley 4071

#### U19 decathlon.

The U19 decathlon was a two horse contest between the tall, broad-shouldered Courtney Heinze of West Australia and the stockier Chris McConnell of Tasmania. On paper, McConnell appeared to have a slight edge in the speed department, both lads were quite competent throwers, and Heinze was better credentialed in the jumps. With two sprint events, two jumping events and one throw on Day One, it looked to be a reasonably close contest – and so it panned out.

McConnell prevailed in the 100m, but by only a narrow margin – 11.72 to Heinze's 11.76 (into a 2.3m/s wind). McConnell 8 points up.

Heinze picked up big points in the long jump, when he spanned 6.21m to McConnell's 5.63m. Heinze in the lead by 116.

The shot saw both lads exceed 13m, but once again Heinze was superior, falling just short of fourteen metres (13.90), while McConnell was just under half a metre behind (13.45). Heinze up by 143 - 2053 to 1910.

In the high jump, Heinze picked up almost another 100 points when he cleared 1.75m to McConnell's 1.63m. Heinze (2638) now held a 240 point lead over McConnell (2398).

With the 400m sprint to finish the day's proceedings, McConnell pegged almost 50 points back when he finished in 52.09 to better Heinze's 53.19. However, Heinze carried a lead of just under 200 points into Day Two. Still, McConnell was now 118 points better than his first day score in his only other decathlon three weeks earlier in Launceston.

End of Day One: Heinze 3311, McConnell 3119.

Fine skies prevailed for Day Two, but there were still cool head winds for the hurdles. McConnell, despite being the shorter of the two competitors, demonstrated better hurdling technique to score a clear win in 16.16s, 0.8 ahead of Heinze who ran 16.96. This took an 87 point chunk out of Heinze's lead, but still left Heinze 105 points ahead - Heinze 3939, McConnell 3834

McConnell had the pressure on him to perform in the discus, and it proved too much for him. While Heinze popped out his biggest throw, 43.96m, on his first attempt, McConnell's first effort was a foul.

He also fouled his second putting enormous pressure on himself for the third. This one measured only 32.44m. Heinze had now skipped away to what appeared would be a winning margin - Heinze 4684, McConnell 4347. McConnell was now also 22 points down at the same stage of his previous decathlon.

Heinze continued to apply the pressure in the pole vault, clearing 3.20m to McConnell's 2.80m, and picking up another 100 points in the process – Heinze 5090, McConnell 4656

In the javelin, Heinze turned the screw a little tighter still, throwing 45.09m to McConnell's 43.46m – Heinze 5606, McConnell 5148.

As the 1500m loomed, McConnell's challenge now was not whether he could catch Heinze – an impossible task barring misfortune to his competitor – but whether he could match or better his own PB in this, his second-ever decathlon.

Heinze held his resolve and, despite not exactly setting the world on fire with his time of 5:20.00, it was enough to turn back the challenge of a quite sunburnt-looking McConnell (5:42.29).

Heinze WA 6056, McConnell TAS 5489



*Courtney Heinze – U19 gold medallist  
(Photo courtesy of Courtney Heinze)*

### U23 decathlon.

Another two man match up – the big Queenslander Cam Crowley v the smaller-framed Oliver Holland from New South Wales.

The '88 born Crowley dominated the younger Holland ('89 born) throughout Day One, with only one blemish. Crowley took out the 100m (11.38 to 11.81), the shot (12.49m to 9.19m), the high jump (1.93m to 1.78m) and the 400m (50.14 to 54.38), but Holland had the better performance in the long jump (6.37m to 6.24m).

So, after Day One, Crowley held a huge lead, 3601 points to 3028.

At the commencement of Day Two, Crowley was keen to make amends for some of his poorer performances from Day One. Unfortunately the decathlon gods were not looking kindly on him. With only a slight head wind of 0.2m/s, Crowley mucked up his lead in to the first hurdle and spent the rest of the race playing catch up. He managed to maintain a three-stride rhythm despite his poor start, but it took him at least four hurdles to build up any speed again. He made a valiant effort, and managed to catch, and then pass, Oliver Holland, reaching the finish line in 16.59, just ahead of Holland's 16.79.

Crowley 4269 Holland 3674

Things didn't improve in the discus for Crowley, with the mollydooker having only two valid throws, in the first and third rounds, and these landing in the 31 metre range. His best measured only 31.71m.

Holland's best throw of 27.39m came in the second round, bracketed by a 25.40m and a 26.41m.

Crowley 4767 Holland 4087

Crowley's unhappy campaign continued in the pole vault. Hoping to vault close to four metres, he managed only 3.40m, for another sub-500 point event. Holland cleared 3.10m, but may have been unwise to pass at 3.20m, as he then failed at 3.30m.

Crowley 5224 Holland 4468

Crowley took some small hope from the javelin when he threw consistently for a 550 plus score. His best throw of 47.67m was only 3cm beyond his next best of 47.64m, earning 554 points. Holland's best was just under 40m. He earned 447 points for his 39.67m effort in the first round.

Crowley 5778 Holland 4915

Crowley's main goal coming into the 1500m was to score enough points to qualify for the Australian Open Men's Decathlon Championships (6200 points). His good effort in the javelin had made this goal far more achievable, and the score tables gave the equation – a time of 5:27.95 would be sufficient.

Barring unexpected circumstance, it should be not a case of whether he would qualify, but by how much. Crowley commenced the contest as man on a mission, running a controlled strong pace. Holland ran his own controlled race behind Crowley, but almost one second per 100m slower.

Crowley went through the 700m mark in a tick over 2:11, so he was definitely on pace for a sub-5 minute effort. The difficult third lap was concluded just as the clock came up to 3:30. A sub-4:50 time was on the cards if Crowley could maintain the rhythm. The first signs of fatigue appeared as he entered the back straight for the last time, and he struggled a little to maintain form. However, showing signs of a good decathlete, Crowley re-focussed and regained his rhythm. As he entered the straight for the last time, the by now very small crowd exhorted him to even greater efforts. Again, he managed to retain his rhythm, stopping the clock at just under the 4:50 mark – 4:49.26. Holland, chasing Crowley's large shape throughout the race had already entered the straight as Crowley crossed the line. With the track side clock in sight, he had his own little personal battle. Could he reach the finish line before the clock ticked over 5 minutes? With renewed vigour he charged for the line and achieved his goal – 4:59.40

Crowley had achieved the goal of qualifying for Open Nationals, and had not only exceeded 6200 points, but passed 6300 and 6400 on the way. His final tally was 6401 points.

The '89 born Holland, in his first year with Open specifications, had scored a commendable 5478.

## Females:

There were six age groups on offer in Hobart, but two of those age groups each had only one entrant – the U15 (Tian Beckett WA) and the U19 (Alison Korotkich NSW). Consequently the administration elected to have the U15 & U16 age group compete together and similarly the U19 and U23 age groups. This effectively reduced the number of competing groups to four.

### U15/U16 heptathlon:

Two competitors from Western Australia, two Queenslanders, two Victorians and one each from South Australia and Tasmania made for some interesting inter-State rivalry. Sandgroper Loughlyn Webb led the rankings for this age group coming into the meet and, on paper at least, she appeared to be the one to beat. Grace Cotton from Victoria was the only 'unknown factor'. All other competitors had some recent performances in a combined event by which to gauge their current form.

From the firing of the first gun, Webb put substance to the paper predictions. She totally dominated the first day of competition, winning every individual event – the 90 hurdles by 0.43 seconds, the high jump by 9cm, the shot by 1.13m and the 200m by 0.29 sec. Her performances of 14.02 (-2.0), 1.60m, 9.67m and 27.20 (+0.8) amassed a total of 2915 points for Day One.

The real questions of interest for this age group going into Day Two would be "How many points could Loughlyn Webb reach?" and "Who would win the contest for the minor medals?"

In fact, such was the dominance of the experienced Webb that, from the first event, the challenge for the minor placings held greater interest for this observer. There were three athletes who were relatively unknown to me – Grace Cotton from Victoria, Natalea Smith from Tasmania and the U15 competitor Tian Beckett from WA. All others I had personally seen compete before, but at least one had not competed in a heptathlon for a while.



From left: Natalea Smith (lane 4), Tess Parton-Oliver, Loughlyn Webb, Amie Blanden, Grace Cotton  
(Photo courtesy of Margaret Hender)

In the contest for silver, lean, long-limbed Grace Cotton threw her hat into the ring early. Her 14.45 into a 2m/s wind earned her a very useful 916 points. Next two across the line behind her were Croweater Amie Blanden (15.13) and Banana-bender Zoe Rowley (15.15), earning 825 and 822 points respectively. Victorian Tess Parton-Oliver was next in 15.89 (728 points) and then three girls hit the line almost simultaneously – Natalea Smith (TAS – 16.12), Zoe Rowley (QLD – 16.12) and Tian Beckett (WA – 16.14).

After one event: Webb 976, Cotton 916, Blanden 825, Rowley 822, Parton-Oliver 728, Smith 700, Standing 700, Beckett (U15) 697.

In the high jump, Beckett and Rowley were the first out, clearing 1.24m for 350 points each. Smith and Parton-Oliver were next to exit, both clearing 1.42m for 534 points. Standring cleared one additional height to reach 1.45m. Cotton went one better with 1.48m, and Blanden went one better again clearing 1.51m. Webb, as mentioned earlier, cleared three more heights finishing with a best of 1.60m.

After event two: Webb 1712, Cotton 1515, Blanden 1447, Standring 1266, Parton-Oliver 1262, Smith 1234, Rowley 1172, Beckett (U15) 1047

In the shot, while Webb dominated, strongly-built Victorian Tess Parton-Oliver proved she was also no slouch with the iron ball, pushing it out to 8.54m. Surprisingly, her fellow Victorian, Grace Cotton, looking more like she might blow away in a high wind than a shot putter, was next best with a heave of 8.22m. Standring (7.84), Smith (7.73) and Rowley (7.47) all achieved marks in the seven metre range, while Beckett (6.91) and Blanden (6.49) both languished in the six metre range. Parton-Oliver's put was sufficient to jump ahead of Standring on the ladder and move within striking distance of third place.

With one event to go on Day One: Webb 2220, Cotton 1929, Blanden 1749, Parton-Oliver 1696, Standring 1655, Smith 1616, Rowley 1537, Beckett (U15) 1376

In the 200m, the Tasmanian managed to get the closest, points-wise, to Webb all day. Webb (27.20) and Smith (27.49) were the only athletes to run under 28 seconds, capitalising on one of the few tail winds of the day (0.8m/s). Smith (672pts) finished only 23 points shy of Webb (695) in this event. Cotton (28.30), Rowley (28.74), Standring (28.89) and Parton-Oliver (28.97) all managed to run under 29 seconds. Youngster Beckett was not far off their pace with her 29.40, but Blanden had an unhappy half-lapper, taking 30.21 seconds to reach the finish line.

After an intriguing Day One, Webb had a commanding lead, Cotton looked entrenched in second place, but behind her the athletes were jumping around in the placings like yo-yos. Only 71 points separated sixth from third!

Webb 2915, Cotton 2536, Smith 2288, Parton-Oliver 2252, Blanden 2227, Standring 2217, Beckett (U15) 2111

Day Two commenced the same way that Day One had finished. Loughlyn Webb continued to dominate on what appeared to be an inexorable march towards victory. Cotton maintained a firm grip on second place, and the rest of the field continued to swap placings.

### Trying to keep warm before the long jump

From left: Zoe Rowley (partly obscured), Grace Cotton, Jasmine Standring, Tian Beckett, Natalea Smith (obscured), Amie Blanden (standing), Loughlyn Webb (photo courtesy of Margaret Hender)

Webb spanned 5.31m in the long jump, with a 1.3m/s following breeze. Cotton used a 3.0m/s breeze to help her to a 5.09m distance. Blanden jumped from fifth place back into third when she was the only other jumper to exceed five



metres (5.02, 0.9m/s). Parton-Oliver remained in 4<sup>th</sup> jumping 4.74m, but Natalea Smith dropped from third to fifth when she could manage only 4.56m. Rowley (4.52) and Standring (4.51) were close behind, but remained in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> spot respectively. Tian Beckett covered 4.19m in the U15 age group.

Webb 3560, Cotton 3120, Blanden 2792, Parton-Oliver 2742, Smith 2731, Standring 2648, Rowley 2544, Beckett (U15) 2253

In the javelin, the best throw of the competition came from - guess who?... Loughlyn Webb, with 35.59m. However, Queenslander Jasmine Standring was not far behind launching the spear out to 34.58m, jumping from sixth place up into fourth in the process. Blanden was next best on 32.01m and held onto third place. Cotton could only muster a 21.53m performance, but had such a cushion from previous events that she maintained her position in second. Parton-Oliver threw 25.13m, but still dropped to fifth behind Blanden and Standring. Smith's 18.88m effort wasn't enough for her to hold onto fifth and she dropped one spot down the ladder into sixth. Rowley threw 21.40m but remained in 7<sup>th</sup>, while in the U15's Beckett managed 20.05m

With one event to go the standings were: Webb 4143, Cotton 3437, Blanden 3307, Standring 3212, Parton-Oliver 3127, Smith 2999, Rowley 2859, Beckett (U15) 2543

In the 800m, Grace Cotton went out hard early, chased closely by Natalea Smith. After the first lap, Smith moved out, passed Cotton, and began a long push for home. Smith continued to extend her lead with every stride, and charged down the main straight with the after-burners blazing in an impressive sprint. Smith eventually crossed the line a full 60m ahead of Cotton. Smith's time was, for this age group in the combined events, a superlative 2:16.68. Cotton broke 2:30 with her 2:29.64 effort.

Standring pushed hard as well to finish third across the line (2:33.14) ahead of Beckett (2:42.22), Blanden (2:43.99), Webb (2:46.21), Rowley (2:47.18) and finally Parton-Oliver (3:00.43).

Gold was safe in the hands of Webb and the silver was destined to be in the tight grip of Cotton, but coaches and parents dived into their back packs looking for the score tables to see who might snag the bronze once the times were announced. Parton-Oliver had obviously dropped out of the picture with her 3 minute-plus run, but Blanden, Standring and Smith were all still in the picture.

Keeping the spectators in suspense, the times weren't announced until the victory ceremony, when all participants, as is the custom in combined events, were called to the presentation podium.

"The winner and gold medallist, with 4647 points, Loughlyn Webb from Western Australia. In second, the winner of the silver medal, with 4134 points, Grace Cotton, from Victoria. In third place, and winner of the bronze medal, from Tasmania, Natalea Smith with 3868 points. Fourth place went to Jasmine Standring from Queensland, 3866 points."

Standring had missed, and Smith had earned, third place by a mere two points after two days of competition over seven events!

Amie Blanden of South Australia scored 3835 points, less than 5 points per event behind the bronze placing. Sixth went to Tess Parton-Oliver with 3488, and seventh to Zoe Rowley 3352.

Tian Beckett from WA won the gold in the U15 age group with 3091 points.



### **U16 medal presentations**

From left: Grace Cotton (VIC – 2nd), Loughlyn Webb (WA – 1st), Natalea Smith (TAS – 3rd)  
Behind – at rear: Amie Blanden, Tess Parton-Oliver, Zoe Rowley, Jasmine Standing  
*(Photo courtesy of Margaret Hender)*



Left: Grace Cotton, silver medallist in U16 heptathlon  
*(Photo courtesy of Rachael Cotton)*

### U17 heptathlon:

The U17 competition had only four competitors, but the quality was high. One competitor each from Queensland (Taylor-Shay Payne), New South Wales (Rachel Hardy), Victoria (Ruby Holten) and Tasmania (Lauren Free) would battle it out for the honours.

Three of the four (Payne, Hardy and Free) had been on my 'radar' when they performed strongly at the Pacific School Games / Australian All Schools, while one (Holten) was relatively unknown to me.

Payne had been dominating combined events competitions in Queensland in the last few months of 2008, so it would be interesting to see how she would fare against the other three, taller girls.

From early on, it was obvious to Payne that she would have a tussle on her hands.

Each of the girls had gone to a new distance in the hurdles, moving from the 90m distance to the 100m specifications. The three taller girls all seemed to have made the adaptation more easily with Hardy defying the 2.7m/s head wind to take victory in 15.51 from Holten (15.51). Free (16.39) edged Payne for third place.

After one event: Hardy 788, Holten 775, Free 667, Payne 659

In the high jump, Hardy and Free both jumped well to clear a best of 1.60m. Payne was one height behind on 1.57m, with Holten having a very 'hit and miss' competition, requiring 12 attempts in the competition before finally clearing 1.54m

After two events: Hardy 1524, Holten 1441, Free 1403, Payne 1360

The shot put saw the strong frame of Lauren Free emerge the winner with a third round toss of 9.75m. Hardy also saved her best for last, throwing 9.65m in the third round. Holten pushed the steel ball past eight metres with an 8.08m heave, while Payne had only one valid throw – her first – to record 7.44m.

Free had now moved into second spot, pushing Holten back into third.

After three events: Hardy 2031, Free 1916, Holten 1846, Payne 1723

In the last event of Day One, Holten threw the challenge back at Free, indicating that she wanted second place back. She was the quickest over the half-lap, riding the 2.9m/s following breeze. Holten was the only athlete to sneak under 27 seconds with her 26.81s effort. Hardy maintained her good first day showing, recording 27.05, ahead of Free (27.77) and Payne (27.90).

Holten had indeed regained second, by the bare margin of 9 points. Payne found herself in the unfamiliar position of being in fourth (and last) position after Day One.

At the end of Day One: Hardy 2739, Free 2565, Holten 2574, Payne 2362

With only three events to contest on Day Two, Payne would need to make every post a winner if she were to have a chance of stepping up onto the victory dais.

A noted long and triple jumper, Payne used her skills in the horizontal jumping to record her first individual victory of the championships, leaping 5.24m to put herself back in the picture.

Free, despite jumping off a sore and strapped foot, managed a solid 5.19m, relegating Hardy (5.00) to third, and Holten to fourth (4.93). Her efforts in the long jump had moved Free to within 30 points of the leader, Hardy.

After five events: Hardy 3298, Free 3177, Holten 3114, Payne 2988

The javelin has historically been another of Payne's better events. She emphasised this point by taking out her second event of Day Two with a strong throw of 34.26m. Free, despite being below her best, managed 32.02m, to stay in the hunt, while Hardy relinquished her lead for the first time in the competition, throwing only 27.85m. Holten, demonstrating a lack of experience in this discipline, could muster only an 18.90m effort, and kissed good-bye to third place.

In a minor re-shuffle, Holten had dropped to fourth and Payne now had both Free and Hardy in her sights, albeit a couple of hundred points away.

With one event remaining: Hardy 3734, Free 3692, Payne 3546, Holten 3382

800m. Hardy led out early with Free on her shoulder. Payne was about three metres behind the front-runners at the bell. Shortly past the 400m mark, Payne passed a flagging Free. With 250m to go, Payne first moved up onto Hardy's shoulder and then passed her. Hardy made every effort to hang onto Payne. With about 190m to go Holten also moved past Free. In the straight Payne ran away from Hardy to win by about 12m. Sixty metres further back behind Hardy was Holten, who finished about 35m ahead of Free. In a very intriguing second day's competition, Payne had won every second day event to move from fourth place onto the medal dais.

Payne's 2:30.14 was good for almost 700 points (691). Hardy was in the mid-600 range (654). Holten had just squeezed past the 500 mark (511), but Free was in the low 400s (437).

How would this affect the placings on the podium?

A quick bit of mathematics revealed that Hardy had regained the gold with a total of 4388. Payne had also surpassed Free, garnering a total of 4237 points. Free's 4129 was still more than enough to account for Holten who, nevertheless, with her 3893 points, had demonstrated a real potential for future success in this demanding but rewarding track and field event.

#### U18 heptathlon:

One of the burning questions in the U18 heptathlon would be whether Gabi Simpson from NSW, who had come within 140 points of qualifying for this year's World Youth Championships could score approximately 20 points more per event, and reach the challenging standard of 5050 points.

A slight head cold, and cool conditions in Hobart, wouldn't help her cause, but Simpson had demonstrated in the sprint hurdles and 400m hurdles at the Pacific School Games in late 2008 that, all other things aside, she was a very tough competitor.

She would be pushed in her quest by relatively experienced heptathletes Jessica Kaufman from Victoria (4038 at the Tasmanian Championships), Kara Walker from Tasmania (3773) and fellow Tasmanian Laura Nicholson (3714). Queenslander Racine Heenan (3386), South Australian Kirrilee Story (3326) and, from New South Wales, Gabrielle Chiu (no heptathlon results so far this season) would no doubt keep their more fancied rivals honest and have their own 'competition within a competition' for bragging rights.

In the first event Simpson, as expected given her hurdling credentials, was first across the line, but her time of 14.51 into a 0.6m/s wind, left her 28 points down, rather than 20 points up, on her score from the NSW Championships – not the start she was hoping for.

Walker (16.26) and Kaufman (16.38) were next across the line as they began what appeared to be, even at this very early stage of the proceedings, a battle for the silver. Heenan (17.17), Chiu (17.25) and Story (17.66) all ran in the 17 second range, while Nicholson, after her 16.42s run at the Tasmanian Champs only a few short weeks ago, would have been sorely disappointed with her 18.05s effort.

Simpson 907, Walker 683, Kaufman 668, Heenan 577, Chiu 569, Story 524, Nicholson 483

The high jump is another of Simpson's relatively strong events. She had cleared 1.68m in Campbelltown at her last heptathlon outing. Could she go a few centimetres higher here?

Chiu was first to go with a best of 1.33m. Next to fall was Nicholson with a best of 1.39m. Again, she would have been disappointed, given the 1.42m she had jumped in Launceston three weeks prior. Story and Kaufman both managed 1.42m, with both Heenan and Walker clearing 1.45.

At this point, Simpson entered the competition, clearing on her first attempts 1.45m, 1.51m, 1.54m, 1.57m and 1.60m. She needed two attempts at both 1.63m and 1.66m, before finally succumbing at 1.69m. Once again, she was 24 points down on where she would have liked to have been in this event rather than 20 points up.

The climb ahead to the qualifying mark began to look decidedly steeper.

Simpson 1713, Walker 1249, Kaufman 1202, Heenan 1143, Chiu 1008, Story 1058, Nicholson 985

In the shot put, Kaufman, better known in many circles as a thrower, dominated the opposition with a prodigious heave of 12.42m. All of Kaufman's three throws were in the 12 metre range. Simpson was next best with a 9.82m put but, once again, this was short of what she had thrown in Campbelltown on the first weekend of January (9.92m). This time the shortfall was only 6 points but again, it was on the wrong side of the ledger. Heenan pushed the ball out beyond eight metres to gain 416 points, and move to within 40 points of Kara Walker in the process. Walker (7.23), Story (7.26), Chiu (7.07) and Nicholson (7.02) all threw in the seven metre range with varying degrees of success. The overall order was unchanged, but Nicholson at least had reversed what was looking to be an unwanted trend, when her throw measured more than half a metre better than she had thrown in Launceston.

Simpson 2231, Kaufman 1891, Walker 1599, Heenan 1559, Story 1410, Chiu 1348, Nicholson 1321

In the final event of Day One, the girls were at least treated to a slight tail wind (0.6m/s) in the 200m. Nicholson, a sprinter/hurdler/long jumper, pushed Simpson all the way to the line. Simpson still prevailed 26.13 to 26.24, but again Simpson was short of her NSW Championships effort – this time by a mere 0.02s! Walker (27.32) and Chiu (27.95) posted times in the 27's. Heenan (28.14) and Story (28.77) were in the 28's, and Kaufman (29.04) showed reasonable speed for a 'thrower' getting home in under thirty seconds. Once again Nicholson was on the rise, being 0.18s faster than her Launceston time. Her time allowed her to leap-frog both Story and Chiu and place her just over 80 points behind Heenan in third. Chiu had also managed to eke out a 2 point advantage over Story.

Simpson was now about 140 points down on where she would have liked to have been at the end of Day One if she were to have a reasonable shot at the World Youth qualifying standard.

What would Day Two hold?

At the conclusion of Day One:

Simpson 3017, Kaufman 2442, Walker 2284, Heenan 2179, Nicholson 2097, Chiu 1983, Story 1981

As mentioned earlier, Nicholson is a sprinter/jumper/hurdler, and she made the first event of Day Two her own, leaping 5.25m to claim the event and relegating Gabi Simpson into second place for only the second time in the competition. Simpson was the only other competitor over five metres (5.08), but once more she was behind her Campbelltown performance (5.33m). Chiu (4.68) nudged out Walker (4.67) for third. Story (4.53) did a similar job on Heenan (4.51), and Kaufman once again demonstrated that she needs work on her jumps, spanning only 4.32m. Walker crept closer to Kaufman, while Nicholson jumped another spot past Heenan to be only 33 points behind Walker.

Simpson 3598, Kaufman 2826, Walker 2756, Nicholson 2725, Heenan 2610, Chiu 2457, Story 2417

As expected in the javelin, Kaufman led the field with a 37.13m throw. Simpson (34.82) was less than two metres short of her best ever throw, but once again she fell further behind her target pace. Walker, despite her diminutive stature, showed the benefits of her javelin work with Hobart-based coach Evan Peacock, and was only about half a metre behind Simpson (34.18m). Heenan (26.26) led the chasing pack, followed by Nicholson (23.07), Chiu (20.79) and Story (19.81).

Simpson 4167, Kaufman 3438, Walker 3312, Nicholson 3071, Heenan 3016, Chiu 2761, Story 2702

With only the 800m to go, Simpson knew that she would have to pull out all stops just to achieve a solid score – hopefully beyond 4750.

She took the lead early trying to push herself through to a good time. Surprisingly the one to stay nearest to her, sitting only a couple of metres behind, was Jessica Kaufman, who was displaying very good aerobic qualities to stay in that position. The next group contained the two Tasmanians Walker and Nicholson, while Chiu, Story and Heenan began to drop off the pace.

Through 600m Kaufman maintained her position behind Simpson. With 200m to go, Kaufman began a move up towards Simpson's shoulder. Into the main straight and Simpson had a glance to see who was pursuing. It was probably a surprise to see the looming figure of Kaufman. Digging deep, Simpson worked to keep her Victorian rival at bay. She managed to do so and, in the process, gave her first performance of the meet where she had bettered her NSW State Championships effort. Unfortunately the gap that had accrued was too great, and despite her run of 2:31.84 being almost seven and a half seconds faster than in Campbelltown, she had fallen short of her weekend's goal by about 220 points. Kaufman ran a great 2:32.48 in second. Walker (2:35.53) and Nicholson (2:36.59) were close together in third and fourth, with Chiu, battling a nasty head cold, still managing to run 2:43.85 for fifth. She was followed home by Story (2:54.89) and Heenan who snuck under three minutes with her 2:59.82.

Kaufman achieved a season's best of 4100 points. Walker was 160 points better than her last outing and is now eying off the 4000 point mark. Nicholson overcame her poor start to the competition and finished only 30 points shy of her season best. Heenan was only 3 points from her season best, but showed that, with a bit more consistency from one event to the next, she could well add a few hundred points to her best score. Chiu's score of 3291 was almost 600 points better than the last heptathlon score I have for her, while Story's tale was a lot like Simpson's – she outscored her previous season's best heptathlon (3326 at the SA Champs in January) in only one event – the javelin.

Final scores:

Simpson 4837, Kaufman 4100, Walker 3937, Nicholson 3684, Heenan 3383, Chiu 3291, Story 3116

U19/U23 heptathlon:

Seven girls registered to compete in the U19 and U23 heptathlons. Alison Korotkich was the sole competitor in the U19s. In the U23 competition there were three Queenslanders (Ashleigh Reid, Larna Dieckman and Emma Capell) and one each from NSW (Rosemary Arnott), Northern Territory (Narelle Long) and Victoria (Brittany Knee).

Korotkich had a sterling 4529 performance beside her name, but this had been as an U18 competitor on the Gold Coast late in 2008. Korotkich had now moved up an age group, and this brought with it a change of specifications for the hurdles to the higher height of 84cm.

In the U23 age group, it was only for Narelle Long that I did not have a season best heptathlon performance. For the others, the rankings read:

- |            |      |              |          |
|------------|------|--------------|----------|
| • Reid     | 4657 | Gold Coast   | 21/12/08 |
| • Arnott   | 4481 | Campbelltown | 04/01/09 |
| • Knee     | 4279 | Launceston   | 11/01/09 |
| • Dieckman | 4047 | Gold Coast   | 16/11/08 |
| • Capell   | 3873 | Gold Coast   | 21/12/08 |

100m hurdles - Reid was the best into the 1.7m/s head wind, recording 14.99 – a little slow by her standards. Arnott (15.14) and Capell (15.87) snuck into the 15's, while Dieckman (16.24), Korotkich (16.49) and Knee (16.57) all ran in the 16's. Long demonstrated a lack of experience in this discipline, recording a best of 20.82s.

Reid 843, Arnott 823, Capell 730, Dieckman 685, Korotkich (U19) 655, Knee 646, Long 238.

In the high jump, the athletes had the cool wind at their backs, which still allowed for some quality jumping. Long was first to exit with a best of 1.39m. Next to finish were Dieckman and Knee, who both cleared 1.54m. Korotkich had only two misses on her way to 1.57m, but failed at 1.60m. Capell started at 1.45m, but cleared each subsequent height through 1.57m on her first attempt. She then required two at 1.60m and three at 1.63m, before bowing out at 1.66m. Arnott demonstrated good vertical jumping ability, entering the competition at 1.57m, and not exiting until the bar was raised to 1.72.

Reid, with the high jump as her forte, was expected to dominate, but even she would probably not have expected to clear a 1.78m PB in the cool conditions. She was in new territory when the bar was raised to 1.81m. She baulked at none, but only her second attempt was a reasonable shot at a clearance.

After two events: Reid 1796, Arnott 1665, Capell 1501, Dieckman 1351, Korotkich (U19) 1356, Knee 1312, Long 740.

In the shot put, Knee was expected to be well out in front of the other girls. She did indeed win the event with a good throw of 11.46m. However, tall Larna Dieckman surprised many (including herself?) with her throw of 10.46m, which was more than 70cm further than she had thrown in her last heptathlon.

Despite her lean build, Reid managed a 9.90m effort, ahead of Korotkich (9.04), Capell (8.41), Long (7.60) and Arnott (7.53). Knee's performance bumped her up into third spot, while everyone else remained in the same relative positions.

After three events: Reid 2319, Arnott 2034, Knee 1935, Capell 1927, Dieckman 1911, Korotkich (U19) 1823, Long 1114.

In the last event for Day One, the girls managed to get a puff of breeze (0.5m/s) behind them off the river. Long-legged Larna Dieckman made the most of the conditions and was the only athlete to run under 26 seconds (25.82). Arnott (26.44), Reid (26.47) and Long (26.73) all ran in the 26's, with Korotkich (27.62) the sole competitor to finish in the 27's. Capell (28.01) and Knee (28.31) both finished slightly further back in the 28's. Dieckman's effort moved her up into third place only 69 points behind Arnott. Capell, in turn, jumped past Knee on the standings.

After the end of Day One: Reid 3076, Arnott 2793, Dieckman 2724, Capell 2557, Knee 2542, Korotkich (U19) 2484, Long 1848.

Day Two began with some tricky conditions in the long jump as the wind, which was mainly a cross breeze from the right, wavered from slight head wind to slight tail wind. Capell and Dieckman in particular demonstrated an allergy to wood, as neither could get their foot on the board in any of their attempts, giving away between 20 and 40 cm on every jump. Korotkich encountered problems when her take off, similar to her high jump take offs, used very little knee drive. With her feet very close together shortly after take off, Korotkich managed to spike herself on the front of her ankle. While she was able to patch herself up for her second attempt, she had to pass her third attempt. However, she had already landed a reasonable effort of 5.33m on her first attempt.

Ashleigh Reid, despite reaching for the board slightly, popped out the best jump of 5.66m, with a 5.60m to back it up. Her second attempt was also long, but she just put her toe into the plasticine. Brittany Knee, with her unusual hip-twisting off the board, managed 5.14m, while Rosemary Arnott was the only other athlete over five metres with her best of 5.03m. Dieckman (4.96) and Long (4.90) came close to 5.00m, but Capell would be ruining the distance she gave away on every jump, when her best was measured at only 4.76m. She dropped from fourth place to below Knee (and Korotkich) on the ladder.

After five events: Reid 3823, Arnott 3360, Dieckman 3272, Knee 3140, Korotkich (U19) 3135, Capell 3052, Long 2380.

Four girls exceeded thirty metres in the javelin, with Knee being the best on 33.55m. Close together behind her were Arnott (30.39), Reid (30.32) and Korotkich (30.19). Capell was close to 30m with her best throw of 29.70m, but Dieckman (23.51) and Long (21.25) obviously have some work to do in this area. While everyone else retained their relative positions, Brittany Knee and Larna Dieckman continued to play musical chairs, with Knee once again moving ahead of Dieckman (by 58 points).

After six events: Reid 4306, Arnott 3844, Knee 3684, Dieckman 3626, Korotkich (U19) 3615, Capell 3523, Long 2692.

The 800m looked to be Dieckman's event. With her background as a 400m hurdler and a sub-2:30 run at her last heptathlon outing, her condition was not in question. No doubt Reid would have liked to push for a 5000 point performance, but with a PB of a little over 2:45, that appeared to be well out of the question. She would need to run a 15 second PB to be in the hunt for that particular milestone.

Previous performances indicated that Korotkich could run close to 2:30, Arnott would run somewhere under the 2:40 mark, with Knee hoping to be just a little over. Reid would probably finish in the 2:45 to 2:55 range (but would be hoping for better). Capell would be hoping to get close to 2:50 and Narelle Long was an unknown quantity.

The race: Dieckman, as expected, led out early, followed by a bunch led by Ashleigh Reid, while Capell dropped off the back of the pack early. At the 400m mark, the girls had sorted themselves out and the formation going into the second lap was Korotkich, Arnott, Knee, Long, Reid and Capell. With 200m to go, Dieckman was 50m ahead of the rest of the field. As the chasing pack came towards the 200m mark, Arnott passed Korotkich. Dieckman stopped the clock in a sterling 2:21.90. Forty metres back, Arnott moved away from a tiring Korotkich reaching the line in 2:32.24. Korotkich managed to hold on for 2:39.09, about ten metres ahead of Brittany Knee (2:41.68). There was about another 30m gap to Long (2:47.50), who was then followed home by Reid (2:51.30) and Capell (2:53.45).

In the final analysis, Reid had improved her PB by almost 100 points. Arnott had improved hers by almost 30 points. Dieckman had been the biggest improver with an almost 400 point boost to her PB.

Knee was down by about 40 points on her Launceston performance, but it is always a big ask to try to complete full heptathlons only three weeks apart. Korotkich in the U19 age group established a "base" PB with the Open specifications, but will need another 330-odd points to bring her back to where she was with the lower hurdles.

Final scores and placings:

U23: Reid 4756, Arnott 4509, Dieckman 4424, Knee 4238, Capell 3951, Long 3182

U19: Korotkich 4198