

Canterbury Regional Officials Newsletter

Special Edition Melbourne Commonwealth Games Special



Welcome to the fourth issue of the Canterbury Regional Officials Newsletter (CRON). The CRON is part of Sport Canterbury's push to provide better recognition and support for officials in the region and we are proud to say we are one of the leading Regional Sports Trusts (RSTs) in this area! I hope that you are all keeping warm and that your officiating hasn't been hindered by the 'Snow Bomb' that we have been experiencing. This is a special edition of the CRON looking at what it was like to officiate at the Melbourne Commonwealth Games. Enjoy your read! Take care. Natalie J

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Melbourne Commonwealth Games 2006 – What were our officials involved in?

New Zealand sent over 119 Officials to Melbourne and they were involved in a number of sports. Our officials ranged from Line judges to Head's of Panels or Head's on the technical committees.

The role of the officials is a pivotal one at the Commonwealth Games, and many go for the love of their sport and to be able to officiate at the highest level of International Sport.

To officiate at the Commonwealth Games, requires a lot of time and dedication to your sport and to the rules of the sport to ensure it is a fair and well balanced contest.

Thank you to all the Canterbury Officials who went to Melbourne and represented us all with such pride. You did officiating in Canterbury Proud!

Throughout the newsletter, you will hear the experiences and memories of five of our officials who went to Melbourne.

NETBALL UMPIRE – MANDY NOTTINGHAM

Announcement of the Netball Umpires for Commonwealth games was made in October 2005 which gave all umpires sufficient time for quality preparation. Good mental and physical preparation, were equally important for “survival and success”.

Meeting other New Zealand officials and some volunteers on the flight over to Melbourne was excellent, particularly given two of these people had attended previous CWG's and/or Olympic games and therefore were able to tell us “novices” how things would operate. In addition it was really nice to bump into each other throughout the duration of CWG's and see how each other was doing (& of course catch up on any news re how the NZ athletes were progressing). The balance of the first day in Melbourne was spent being fitted out with the official's uniform and getting settled into our hotel rooms.

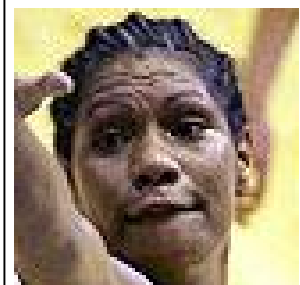
The netball competition ran for 10 days, with round robin competition for the first 7 days followed by cross over games between the two pools, semis and finally the two medal games. There were 12 teams and 13 umpires for the competition. Four New Zealand and four Australian Umpires were appointed which left only five spaces for umpires from other countries. Umpires are appointed on neutrality to games. For the first six days of competition there were four games per day, which of course meant that not all umpires were required to either umpire or reserve daily. With so few games, this did create a level of anxiety for some umpires; fortunately my mentor and coaches had more than prepared me for these types of scenarios, which meant I could enjoy the “quieter” days at the office.

Appointment to games was guaranteed for “one game only”; there after appointment was dictated solely on individual performances. Feedback on performance (including written KPI's) was given on every game, which was helpful.

The level of competition in round robin was variable. All games were challenging, some simply due to the variable skill levels of the players, others due to the level of rules knowledge of players and in some cases due to the English speaking skills of some players (effective hand signals were essential!). Once the competition moved into the cross over games between the two pools, the game intensity increased resulting in some very tightly contested games.

Bronwyn Meek (NZ umpire) and I umpired the round robin game between Australia and Jamaica. This was an excellent game with a high level of player skill and game intensity. The game ended in a draw; adding a level of intensity and speculation to the competition in terms of who could and would make the semi finals.

Umpiring the semi final (Australia/Jamaica) followed the next day by the bronze medal game, (Jamaica/England; England won by 1 goal) made for a great finale to a challenging but rewarding tournament.



ATHLETICS OFFICIAL – LEON BLANCHETT

I was surprised and pleased to be invited to officiate at the Commonwealth Games as a member of the Athletics Jury of Appeal.

After many months of waiting the Games had started and I along with three other local Athletics officials arrived in Melbourne for the start of the Athletics.

The accommodation for athletics officials was the Mecure Hotel in Swanston Street only a short bus or tram ride or even better a pleasant stroll along the banks of the Yarra river to the Athletics Stadium, (Melbourne Cricket Ground) soaking up the carnival atmosphere among the thousands of visitors and locals.

At this event the Jury of Appeal consisted of five members with one local and the other members coming from various parts of the Commonwealth (Wales, Seychelles, Malaya and this Kiwi)

The Jury Rooms, which were our daily home during athletics competition, would probably have been rated five star plus as the best viewing spot in the stadium. Its situation half way down the 100 metre sprint straight on the third level gave us a magnificent view of what must be rated as one of the worlds "Greatest Stadiums". Our two side by side rooms were normally used by the coaching staff at AFL matches.

What was our role as members of the Jury of Appeal? In simple terms if an athlete infringes the rules of Competition (track or field) and feels hard done by they in the first instance will make a protest to the Event Referee who will rule on the matter. If the appropriate Referee upholds the decision made by the event officials and the athlete still feels grieved they have the right to make an appeal to the Jury. At this point the Jury would review all relevant information from Event Official's, Referee and video footage of the event and rule accordingly.

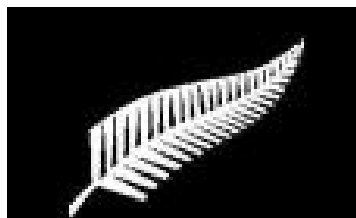
In the first few days of competition we could be considered spectators but as the days rolled on and finals started to take place we were in overdrive, especially during the relay heats and finals.

With sixty six nations and a thousand athletes competing the stadium became a sea of colour over the ten days of competition. With painted faces and flags draped round shoulders it was very easy to see who was supporting who. The largest group by far wearing their yellow and green war paint were the Aussies. This very large, noisy, parochial group of Aussie supporters certainly inspired their athletes to great heights. One must admire the success of their team!

If there is to be a memorable moment from these games which I will never forget it would be those final few kilometres of the Women's Marathon. What an incredible finish! Only two seconds between first and second, the closest finish in the history of marathon running, male or female.

Our vantage point in the stand also gave me the opportunity to follow the progress of our Kiwi athletes from heats to finals. On the whole our athletes competed exceptionally well and I for one was proud to be a Kiwi even if my singing of the National Anthem would have left the Choir Master cringing!!!

I don't know what others thought of the Closing Ceremony but I for one was disappointed. In my view the highlights would have been India's package (Next Host Nation) at the end of the show and the fireworks display.



ATHLETICS OFFICIAL – ROD SYME

I had the privilege of attending the Melbourne Commonwealth Games as a Technical Official for Athletics. I was appointed by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) as one of a panel of six International Technical Officials with responsibility for overseeing the conduct of all Track and Field events at the MCG and the associated marathon and road walking events. Each competition day each member of this panel was assigned to cover a specific selection of events, working with the local Technical Officials to ensure the smooth conduct of those events in accordance with the appropriate International Technical Rules. I had had previous experience in working with many of the senior Australian officials and did not anticipate any particular difficulties. Over the seven competition days that expectation was fully confirmed and although several unusual situations occurred they were all dealt with appropriately and efficiently.

My specific duties began with a grand tour of Melbourne in the lead police car for the marathon events. Although I did not get to see much of the actual racing other than the leading women in a rear-vision mirror, I was able to keep up with the progress of both women's and men's events via the police radio channel, including a good appreciation of the logistics of traffic control for such an event and had the experience of a lap of the Melbourne Grand Prix circuit!

Apart from time observing conduct of track events, my arena duties included Men's Discus and High Jump qualification, Men's Seated Discus, Women's Pole Vault qualification and final and Women's Hammer and Long Jump finals. Highlights for me were the performances of the NZ Combined Events athletes, Rebecca Wardell (Heptathlon) and Brent Newdick (Decathlon), each achieving several PBs; the very tight Women's Long Jump, with 4 cm covering 2nd to 6th places and Chantal Brunner just missing on a medal; Valerie Adams' demolition of the Women's Shot Put field – unfortunately overshadowed on the night by an unexpected Australian win in the Men's 400m; and, of course, the final session when I managed to follow Nick Willis' dramatic 1500m win while on duty at a very tactical Women's Pole Vault final.

Athletics Technical Officials were conveniently accommodated in the downtown "Mercure Welcome", off Swanston Street. Although bus transport to and from the MCG was provided, many chose the alternative of a 30 min walk, via Federation Square and the riverside pedestrian access to the competition venue, giving the opportunity to mingle with the crowds and absorb the festival atmosphere of the city. The only real difficulty was finding somewhere to eat at 11.30 pm after the evening sessions. No doubt the limited selection available in nearby Chinatown was good preparation for those who may get Beijing assignments in 2008!

Overall, the organization of Melbourne 2006 appeared to go very smoothly. There are always some crises in an event of this magnitude, but those I was aware of were dealt with appropriately and generally kept "behind the scenes". Apart from the road cycling on the final day, I had little opportunity to see anything of other sports, but I did manage get to a couple of Art Galleries and to soak up some of the general Melbourne atmosphere. The Games Closing Ceremony was undoubtedly a grand production, but most of it appeared to have little connection with the participating sports. One has to question the need for such extravagant productions, with each successive Games Organization trying to outdo all previous events. One gets the impression that for some the actual sporting events are an inconvenient diversion between Opening and Closing Ceremonies!

AVRIL ENSLOW – GYMNASTICS

I was fortunate to be invited as a Head Judge for Gymnastics in Melbourne, my 5th Commonwealths as a Judge and everyone has been different. This time I drew floor which I was looking forward to as it is considered the most artistic of the apparatus and a spectator favourite. I always feel honored to have such a good seat at these events and to have a say in who gets the medals.

The Melbourne Games was the first big competition of the new Olympic Cycle. FIG was required to change dramatically the way it scores the gymnasts after the problems with the Men's judging in Athens. All the world's judges had to learn the new rules and regulations and sit and pass the examinations prior to being invited to Melbourne.

As judges we struggled with applying the new rules, it didn't help that there were continual updates and clarifications still coming in even as we arrived for the competition. We (Gymnasts and judges) were in fact guinea pigs, as there had not been time to fully test the new code prior to its release. For the record there were some very important changes to the judging system made after this competition due to the problems we experienced.

Gone was the semi relaxed judging panels enjoying the performances that the gymnasts had worked hard to perfect, our brains were severely tested on many levels, mathematics included, and we earned our per diems for sure.

One of the major changes in this code this cycle was the opportunity for coaches to approach the Head Judges table and complain about a score of their gymnast. Prior to this it was a carding offence to approach or even talk to an 'active judge'. This opportunity to approach the Head Judge came about because of the IOC demand that athletes must have the opportunity to protest their marks, just in all other Olympic sports.

I had the dubious honor of having the first "protest" lodged by a coach. It happened on the last rotation on floor in the individual all around competition, the Australian coach protested about Chloe Sim's start score (A Score - content).



He had to pay USD300 before we were allowed to check the routine using the Instant Video replay screen we now have for this purpose. Luckily the mark that she was given was correct, but the coach didn't mind too much losing his money to the FIG fund as his gymnast won the competition anyway.

Gymnastic judges were housed in the centre of Melbourne, right on Swantson Street, in the Mecure Hotel along with a number of other sports. The accommodation was a little small but adequate, it was possible to walk faster to the venue on most days than take the organised bus due to the traffic one way systems put in place.

Melbourne Games was a great games, it was simple to move around and the other venues were very easy to get to and to get into without a ticket .I managed to watch, athletics, hockey, netball (quite a few games) some cycling and of course lots of gymnastics. NZ House was only a few blocks away and became a meeting place for friends.

Will I go to India? We will see. Brown was the new black in Melbourne, what would they outfit the officials in India?



Richard Bramley – Badminton Umpire

The XVIII Commonwealth Games in Melbourne were my first Commonwealth Games and what a fantastic experience. I attended as a badminton umpire being one of the large team of technical officials from throughout the Commonwealth.

For the 200 badminton athletes, the event required one referee (in charge of the tournament), three deputy referees, 30 umpires (in charge of the on court play), 80 line judges and 71 volunteers not to mention the numerous administration, medical and security staff.

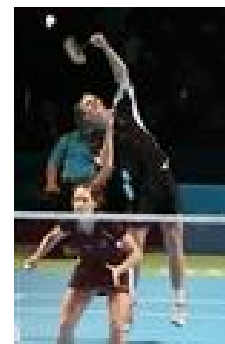
Badminton was held at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre along with Boxing and Weightlifting. This building is huge; having 30,000m² of pillar less floor space equal to 3-4 rugby fields under one roof. There is a 450m long concourse down one side and the large moveable partitions split the Centre into seven separate areas providing the main arena for each sport as well as warm-up, administration, press and medical areas.

The badminton arena contained five courts (one television court) with a further two warm-up courts in the back section. The seating was for approximately 2,500 spectators. At times, these were taken up by some rowdy "Blackcocks" supporters, the unofficial name for the NZ badminton team, who had specially printed t-shirts which became a highly sought after souvenir item.

Badminton ran the entire 11 days of the Games (23 sessions) with the team's event followed up by the individuals. There were nearly 400 matches, of which I officiated 30 matches either as the umpire or the service judge. These ranged from relative "minos" in the sport being Uganda & Kenya to the Gold Medal team's match between Malaysia & England. The Games required total neutrality for officials so I had a large number of matches umpiring Australians on the TV court. New Zealand gained a silver medal in the mixed doubles and finished 4th in the team's event.

Highlights included being invited to the New Zealand team function where Hamish Carter was named as the team captain and flag bearer. This was a moving ceremony and it was great to hear Kiri Te Kanawa speak to the team along with legends like Sir Murray Halberg. The three live songs from Dave Dobbin were amazing and this was followed by an impromptu Haka from the sevens and hockey boys. Being able to go to the Opening and Closing Ceremonies was a bonus and texting people at home as they watched on TV made me realise I was witnessing something quite special. Time not spent officiating included sightseeing, a round of golf, shopping and a bit of culture when attending "The Lion King".

Melbourne certainly turned it on during the Games in all aspects of the organisation; transportation, security and friendliness of the city. Everybody was happy, having a great time and even the weather was obliging.



"We are committed to getting world-class results and this is achieved not only by supporting the athlete, but also supporting the people behind sport who help make it happen."

Trevor Mallard

REGIONAL OFFICIALS NETWORK EVENING

DAVID ELLERAY

Former English Premiership and FIFA Football Referee

When: Thursday 27th July 2006

Where: Christchurch Football Clubrooms, Westminster Street

Time: 7:30pm

Cost: \$5. (Cash bar and nibbles provided)

David Elleray was the highest profile British football referee in the world game until his recent retirement. A highly entertaining speaker, David has many stories to tell about his career, the controversial games, the world-class players and the managers he has met during his years at the top in football. David was there when Ryan Giggs scored his 'wonder goal' and just yards from David Beckham the day he scored from his own half.

A Premier League and FIFA referee, David officiated at Wembley fourteen times and in over seventy international matches.

One of the most recognisable figures in football, David's appeal to an audience goes way beyond that of the sports fan as he gives a fascinating and unique insight into the heart of the game.

David Elleray is Honorary President of the Referees Association of England, a member of the FA Council and a FIFA and UEFA referee assessor and instructor. He is also a keen supporter of initiatives such as the Street League that uses football as a means to help the socially excluded and the underprivileged.



A registration form to attend the evening will be emailed out to you in the up coming days.

You will have to be in quick and places will fill up fast!

"Whether it's grass-roots or world-class competition, officials are a critical part of New Zealand sport"

- Trevor Mallard

Ice Hockey Exchange to Australia

Congratulations Chris Watson to be the first Ice Hockey Referee to go to Australia to Referee at the Australian Under 18 Tournament. Chris was selected because of his willingness and enthusiasm to progress as an official. Good Luck and Well Done Chris!

Contact Sport Canterbury on 03 373 50 60 or
official@sportcanterbury.org.nz
if you have an ideas or questions about the network.