



**athletics**  
Australia

Homebush Olympic Park, Sydney  
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The Melbourne Commonwealth Games are just around the corner and with the Australian Championships acting as the selection trial, the racing was always going to be a tight, closely fought affair.

by Daniel Green

Huge field for the women's steeplechase



### MEN'S 800M – Bromley goes two in a row

The three heats of the men's 800m was a cut-throat affair with automatic qualification for the first two across the line and the next two fastest. In heat one, the defending Australian champion, Nick Bromley, was up against Mitchell Kealey, Frazer Dowling, Todd MacDonald and Tom Richardson amongst others. Bromley and Kealey lead through the bell in 54 seconds and opened a small break on the field. On the last bend Bromley opened up to move away from the field and Taylor from WA was moving into contention. Into the straight Ross Ridgewell managed to outrun the rest of the field for second and the remaining automatic position behind Bromley. Kealey and Taylor both qualified for the finals on time.

Kris McCarthy made a return to competition in heat two and was in contention for the first 500m. The heat was lead through the bell in 55 seconds by Julian Marsh before Will Devjak took command with 250m to go. Werner Botha worked his way into second position and remained there to join Devjak as automatic qualifiers for the final. Kris McCarthy finished third and missed out.

Heat three saw the new kid on the block, Lachlan Renshaw, going up against Andrew Krumins and Nick Hudson. Renshaw and Krumins dominated from the outset, passed through the bell in 55 seconds and were never really troubled in claiming the last two automatic positions.

In the final Taylor, Krumins and Bromley lead the field through the lane break. After they settled down it was Bromley who ended up boxed in on the rails with Taylor and Krumins taking up the lead. As they approached the bell, Botha made a strong move to be level with the leaders as they went through in 55.4. The positions remained unchanged until the end of the back straight when Krumins made a run for home. This opened the door for Bromley who moved with real certainty at 180m to quickly form a winning gap. Botha moved into second and Renshaw claimed his first Australian Open Medal at just 18 years old.

#### RESULTS

1. Nick Bromley	NSWIS	1.48.96
2. Werner Botha	QAS	1.49.38
3. Lachlan Renshaw	NSW	1.49.60
4. William Devjak	NSW	1.49.98
5. Andrew Krumins	VIC	1.50.42
6. Ross Ridgewell	ACT	1.50.63
7. John-Paul Taylor	WA	1.51.37
8. Mitchell Kealey	QAS	1.51.77

### MEN'S 1500M – Chisholm's bold attempt

Two heats of the men's 1500m saw the first four placegetters from each heat plus the next four fastest qualifying for the final. Coming into the home straight with 3 laps to go in heat one, Philo Saunders fell heavily after clipping another competitor, receiving a deep gash in his calf and ending his hopes of qualifying for the Commonwealth Games.

Passing through the first 400m in around 61's, all the remaining contenders were tucked in nicely behind Croker. Two zero three was the call at the 800m split, with Croker still leading the way. At 650m to go Victorian athlete Mark Fountain moved to the lead and took the pack to the bell in 2:49. Looking comfortable and controlled Fountain stayed in the lead for the remainder of the race, crossing the line in 3.46.

There was a mad dash for the remaining automatic qualifying spot and these were taken by Mark Tucker, Paul Hoffman, and Louis Rowan.

The second heat was run very similar to the first with Jeremy Roff dictating the pace with Lachlan Chisholm close on his heels. Roff took them through the first 400m in 61 seconds. Through the 800m mark in 2.04, the field started to string out along the back straight, but at the bell (2.50) all the major contenders were still near the front. Victorian Collis Birmingham was the first to clear out, taking the lead just after the bell. He maintained form throughout the final lap to record a narrow victory in 3.47. Another 6 runners were in the battle for the remaining spots in the final. Chisholm, Roff and Mitchell Kealey took the automatic spots, with Corey Tucker, and Alistair Stevenson close behind and qualifying for the final as fastest losers. The final would be a hotly contested affair!

In 2005, the depth in Australia's 1500m running was as strong as it had ever been with seven athletes running 3.40.0 or under and no less than 16 athletes running under 3.43. However, due to the brevity of the qualifying period only three athletes posted Commonwealth qualifying times (sub 3.40) including Craig Mottram, Mark Fountain, and Jeremy Roff. But with seven other athletes competing in the final who were all realistically a chance to go under the required time, the battle for a Commonwealth Games spot was going to be fierce and the light winds and cool conditions at Homebush looked to be helping their cause.

Lachlan Chisholm has suffered from a string of related injuries in the 2005/6 season, but immediately made his intentions clear when he shot into the lead down the back straight. The group settled in behind the fast pace as 300m was cleared in 43 seconds. The remainder of the field were happy to march in unison behind the strong frame of Chisholm, as he

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single handed dragged the field through 800m in 1.58. Fountain was sitting ominously on Chisholm's shoulder with Paul Hoffman, Mark Tucker, Collis Birmingham, and Corey Tucker all lining up and preparing for the frantic final lap once they passed through the bell in 2.43.

Down the back straight, Paul Hoffman started to make a strong move, attempting to come around Fountain who was still on the shoulder of Chisholm, who would still not surrender the lead. Entering the final straight the men lined up and Collis Birmingham ran himself into the picture, while Mark Fountain was just about to pounce. However, Fountain was not able to change gears and Chisholm was not only holding his slender lead but now starting to pull away in the final 40 metres. A blanket covered 2nd to 5th position with Birmingham grabbing 2nd, centimetres ahead of Hoffman. It was an amazing performance from Chisholm, leading the race from start to finish in this pressure situation and still holding on for victory, unluckily for him just outside of the B-qualifying time.

#### RESULTS

1. Lachlan Chisholm	NSWIS	3.40.87
2. Collis Birmingham	VIC	3.41.03
3. Paul Hoffman	NSW	3.41.05
4. Mark Fountain	VIC	3.41.36
5. Jeremy Roff	NSWIS	3.41.66
6. Corey Tucker	ACT	3.42.08
7. Louis Rowan	VIC	3.42.53
8. Mitchell Kealey	QAS	3.45.95
9. Mark Tucker	VIC	3.46.35
10. Bradley Woods	NSW	3.49.97

#### MEN'S 5000M – Impressive is not a strong enough word

Another strong field presented itself for the men's 5000m, however it was 2005 World Championships bronze medallist, Craig Mottram, that everyone had come to see. In addition to the excitement surrounding Mottram's presence there were several athletes that were a realistic chance of posting a Commonwealth Games B-qualifying time (sub 13.40) in an event that only currently had two qualifiers, Mottram and Louis Rowan.

Alastair Stevenson led the field through the opening km in 2.51, before Brett Cartwright moved to the lead in an attempt to get the pace on track for the qualifying time.

The field was strung out single file with Stevenson, Scott Westcott, David Byrne, Collis Birmingham, Mottram, David Ruschena, Mark Tucker, Martin Dent, and Louis Rowan all lined up behind Cartwright. Passing through 2km in 5.36, Cartwright had nearly got them back to within striking distance of the target time, but was not receiving any help from his fellow runners who were all still lined up single file behind.

By the 3km point (8.27) a frustrated Cartwright was still in front and had given up the ghost of chasing the time, no one had changed positions and so all that remained was to see when Mottram would make his move and if Rowan could secure his spot on the Commonwealth Games team.

The racing began with 4 laps to go as people started to jockey for positions, and 4km was passed in 11.20 with Mottram slowly making his way towards the front of the group.

Mottram's seemingly premeditated move was decisive and lethal as he squeezed the trigger with exactly 2 laps remaining. He immediately moved away and opened up 40m in the space of 300m on the pack of chasing athletes who were all racing hard for second place, lead by Byrne.

The ground simply disappeared under Mottram's stride and it was quite amazing to see this type of kick down, usually reserved for major European meets. Covering the last 800m in 1.53, he put the full length of the home straight into his pursuers in the space of 800m.

Louis Rowan was good enough to get second and secure his spot in the Commonwealth Games team, while Birmingham claimed his second Australian Championship medal in two days, very impressive for the 21 year old.

#### RESULTS

1. Craig Mottram	VIS	13.47.44
2. Louis Rowan	VIC	13.57.92
3. Collis Birmingham	VIC	13.58.15
4. David Byrne	NSW	13.58.43
5. Martin Dent	ACTAS	14.00.02
6. David Ruschena	VIC	14.09.81
7. Brett Cartwright	ACT	14.11.20
8. Scott Westcott	NSWIS	14.14.09
9. Alastair Stevenson	QLD	14.17.16
10. Jeffrey Hunt	NSW	14.43.84



Mottram making it look all too easy

#### MEN'S 3000M STEEPLECHASE – Abdi proves it was a good decision

The men's steeplechase was always going to be a thrilling event at the national champs as Peter Nowill had shown impressive form prior to Christmas and Youcef Abdi more recently had his breakthrough performance running under 8.30. To throw further fuel onto the fire, Martin Dent was making one last ditch effort to successfully qualify for the Commonwealth Games in what is essentially now rated as his third event.

From the gun Dent made it clear his intention was to try and post a qualifying time and almost immediately he dragged Grant Schmidlechner and Abdi away with him, Nowill about five metres back. Dent was looking a little rusty over the barriers, but Abdi was showing the dividends of tutorage from hurdles coach Lindsey Watson and looking extremely smooth. Rocketing through the first km in 2.48, the qualifying time was well within reach if they could maintain the pace. Nowill was still unable to close up the small gap to the front group.

Abdi took over the leading duties from Dent and the two began to cooperate seamlessly at the front of the race. In the second km Schmidlechner dropped off the pace, the gap to Nowill opened up to 25 metres and the fast tempo continued, carrying the leaders through 2km in 5.41. As they approached the bell, Abdi and Dent were still together and about 40m in front of Nowill who had passed Schmidlechner and moved into 3rd position. Down the back straight Abdi cleared out and powered away to record a victory and another time under 8.30. Martin Dent managed to run a personal best and a qualifying time, and by finishing in second position, essentially claimed his spot in

the Commonwealth Games team. Nowill just held onto third position from a fast finishing Schmidlechner, to round out a strong team of steeplechasers for the upcoming Games.

#### RESULTS

1. Youcef Abdi	NSWIS	8.27.60
2. Martin Dent	ACTAS	8.29.98
3. Peter Nowill	QAS	8.39.50
4. Grant Schmidlechner	VIC	8.39.54
5. Jeffrey Hunt	NSW	8.45.81
6. Jayden Russ	QAS	8.54.19
7. Scott McTaggart	ACT	9.01.53
8. Shane Thiele	SA	9.25.65
9. Sapolai Yao	PNG	9.51.74

#### MEN'S 10000M – Letherby's first senior title

It is hard to imagine a tiny field of nine athletes assembled for the men's Australian 10,000m championship, but that was how many toed the line for this year's race. The current Commonwealth Games marathon bronze medallist, Andrew Letherby, had recently returned from the USA to finalise his preparation for the upcoming Melbourne Commonwealth Games marathon and was looking like a strong favourite in the event. New Zealand's Dale Warrander had also made the journey over to run this event and a warm, humid, breezy night greeted the entrants.

The field was lead through the first two kms in 6.03 by Barry Keem of NSW with Magnus Michelsson, David Ruschena, Warrander, Russell Dessaix-Chin and Letherby all in close attendance. The pace continued to be very conservative through the next two kms and 4km was past in a slow 12.05. The lead group was down to five by the six km point as Andrew Letherby had made his way to the front and started to increase the tempo. 18:08 was showing on the clock as they went through with ten laps remaining. Letherby then began to open the main spinnaker and set sail for home. Within another lap it was down to just Letherby and Ruschena, whilst Chin hung on gallantly a few metres adrift for one more lap. Ruschena was still hanging on to Letherby's coat tails as they passed through 8km in 23.52, but a fast final two kms saw Letherby disappear up the track to capture his first national senior title in 29.33. Ruschena hung on for second, while Warrander ran strongly in the final km to take third position.

#### RESULTS

1. Andrew Letherby	VIC	29.33
2. David Ruschena	VIC	30.05
3. Dale Warrander	NZL	30.13
4. Russell Dessaix-Chin	NSW	30.28
5. Barry Keem	NSW	30.48
6. Glenn Guzzo	NSW	30.57
7. Magnus Michelsson	VIC	31.12
8. Michael Hosking	ACT	31.41
9. Daniel Kolsky	VIC	38.13

#### WOMEN'S 800M – Walsham earns a double

There were three heats of the women's 800m, providing automatic selection for the first two in each heat plus the next two fastest. In heat one, Suzy Walsham was backing up after her 2nd placing in the 1500m the day before and was up against the teenage defending 800m champion Katherine Katsanevakis. Neither were really troubled in the heat and took out both of the automatic qualifying positions.

Rikke Roenholt from Denmark was representing the ACT and running against Libby

Allen, Veronique Molan, Kate Pedley and Caitlin Willis in heat two. Libby Allen led through the bell in 62.7 and along with Roenholt and Molan, moved away from the field down the back straight. Roenholt and Allen pulled away to take the first two automatic positions, while Molan and Pedley claimed spots in the final as the next two fastest.

Heat three was a blanket finish with only 3 tenths of a second separating the first four finishers. Erica Sigmont and Brooke Simpson led the heat through the bell in 62 seconds.

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Letherby back from  
the States to dominate  
10,000m

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Sigmond opened up a gap down the back straight, while Tamsyn Lewis, backing up after winning the national 400m championship, ran a strong final 100m to snatch the win from Sigmond, narrowly ahead of Alicia Tye-Smith and Brooke Simpson.

After winning the third heat Tamsyn Lewis decided not to contest the final, and it was left with seven starters and no stand out favourite. Suzy Walsham led the way through the first lap and hit the bell in 60.5 with Allen on her shoulder. Walsham stretched the field down the back straight with Allen and Roenholt chasing hard. Digging into her 1500m strength, Walsham continued to push and held her lead all of the way up the straight, ahead of Roenholt in second position and Allen in third. Walsham was delighted after the race and sealed her second spot in the Commonwealth Games team from a very impressive display over the weekend.

### RESULTS

1. Suzy Walsham	NSWIS	2.01.85
2. Rikke Roenholt	ACT	2.02.31
3. Libby Allen	VIC	2.02.71
4. Erica Sigmond	VIC	2.02.97
5. Katherine Katsanevakis	VIS	2.05.17
6. Veronique Molan	NSW	2.05.48
7. Kate Pedley	TAS	2.06.00

### WOMEN'S 1500M – It was a fast one!

The women's 1500m was a straight final and looking to be a great contest between the in form Suzy Walsham and Sarah Jamieson, who had returned to competition after a hamstring strain in December.

Walsham left no one guessing regarding her tactics after going straight to the front and setting a very strong pace. Jamieson was able to get onto her heels and was closely followed by Lisa Corrigan, all of whom had Commonwealth Games qualifying times. Passing through 800m in 2.10 the pace was certainly on and Lisa Corrigan began to feel the effects on the third lap. Entering into the final lap it was down to a contest between two - Walsham and Jamieson. The pace was still hot and both were fighting tooth and nail to come away with the Australian title. Jamieson made her move with 250m to go and looked sensational as she hit the lead for the first time. The time off in December did not appear to do Jamieson any harm as she went on to record the fastest time in Australia by an Australian over the 1500m. Walsham hung on for a strong second placing just outside her personal best and Corrigan's third place ensured that we now have three representatives in the 1500m at the Commonwealth Games.

### RESULTS

1. Sarah Jamieson	VIS	4.05.52
2. Suzy Walsham	NSWIS	4.08.72
3. Lisa Corrigan	ACTAS	4.14.74
4. Rebecca Forlong	VIC	4.19.08
5. Lara Tamsett	NSWIS	4.25.65
6. Lucy Starrat	NSW	4.29.11
7. Anna Worland	VIC	4.29.26
8. Sophie Dickson	VIC	4.29.37
9. Alexis McKillop	NSW	4.33.12
10. Rebecca Lowe	NSW	4.36.24

### WOMEN'S 3000M STEEPLECHASE – Ten weeks training - national title, no problems!

The women's steeplechase is still a relatively new event on the world stage and it generated a lot of interest from athletes as an event to potentially gain selection into the Commonwealth Games team. Subsequently this led to four Australian athletes posting qualifying times for the event and it was going to be cut-throat race to see who would earn their positions in what was a huge field for a women's distance running event.

Kate McLroy from New Zealand, winner of the Zatopek 10,000m and World Mountain

Running Championships, took the lead and was happy to push the pace along. Joining her at the front were the four Australian athletes with qualifying times, Melissa Rollison, Donna MacFarlane, Victoria Mitchell and Madeleine Heiner. The first km was passed in a very fast 3.06. McLroy continued to push the pace at the front through the second km and it was only with three laps to run that Rollison took over the lead. At this time there was a small gap to MacFarlane and Heiner who had just dropped off the lead group. Rollison passed through the 2km mark in 6.23 and was starting to assert her dominance on the race. Rollison gradually increased her lead, while MacFarlane was hanging tough just five metres off the back of Mitchell and McLroy. While Rollison went on to win comfortably, just outside the Australian record, Mitchell was poised to take the silver medal until hitting the final barrier and falling to the track. MacFarlane came through for a very good second to secure her place in the Games team, while Mitchell recovered sufficiently to still run a personal best time. MacFarlane worked courageously to steal second position from McLroy. Rollison's win was somewhat even more remarkable considering she had only been training again for ten weeks since returning from injury and coaching problems.

### RESULTS

1. Melissa Rollison	QLD	9.35.46
2. Donna MacFarlane	TIS	9.40.06
3. Kate McLroy	NZL	9.40.20
4. Victoria Mitchell	VIC	9.44.06
5. Madeleine Heiner	NSWIS	10.08.82
6. Kristy Villis	SA	10.30.56
7. Rachel Green	VIC	10.39.90
8. Jessica Gilfillan	QLD	10.59.67
9. Georgia Kaidonis	SASI	11.02.89
10. Kathryn Archbold	NSW	11.04.85

### WOMEN'S 5000M – Eloise is back

It was a very small field that took to the track for the women's 5000m, but plenty of people were paying attention as Sonia O'Sullivan strove to earn her first representation for Australia. A solid opening km of just under 3.10 saw Eloise Wellings, O'Sullivan, Emma Rilen, Fiona Crombie and Tiffany Bonasera all still bunched together. However, Wellings had come to the track this evening to demonstrate her impressive current form and took over the running, immediately forcing everyone to chase. By the halfway point Wellings had broken away from the field and was running very strongly from the front, O'Sullivan and Rilen were running together about 30 metres behind. Four kms was passed in 12.27 and Wellings had found the rhythm and fitness that had eluded her for several years, looking every bit a quality runner. Rilen had moved into second place in front of O'Sullivan,



Eloise Wellings is a star reborn

but O'Sullivan showed the years of strength by clawing her way back.

Eloise Wellings' victory cemented her place in the Commonwealth Games team and it is great to see her back in top shape. O'Sullivan had to work extremely hard in the final lap to just sneak under the B qualifying time by less than one second and will round out a strong Australian team for the women's 5000m at the Commonwealth Games.

### RESULTS

1. Eloise Wellings	NSWIS	15.28
2. Sonia O'Sullivan	VIC	15.44
3. Emma Rilen	NSWIS	15.51
4. Tiffany Bonasera	NSW	16.17
5. Fiona Crombie	NZL	16.22
6. Eliza Stewart	NSW	17.26

### WOMEN'S 10000M – Johnson's on track

12 athletes lined up in somewhat windy conditions for the women's 10,000m. New Zealand competitor Jessica Ruthe took the lead from the gun, settling into a comfortable rhythm going through the first km in 3.12. By 2km (6.26) an elite group of 5 runners had broken away with Ruthe still on the front followed by 2004

World Cross Country Champion Benita Johnson, the current Commonwealth Games marathon champion Kerryn McCann, Haley McGregor and Anna Thompson.

The athletes remained in that order passing through 3km in 9:44. However at 4km the pace had slowed and this saw a change in the lead, with Johnson taking up the pace. Ruthe dropped to 5th and the pack of 5 remained intact. Johnson wound the pace back up, reaching the halfway mark in 16.25. At this point Ruthe dropped from the lead pack and it was down to four.

Johnson continued to tighten the screws and soon Haley McGregor was also no longer able to stay with the leaders. Through 6km in 19.38, Johnson had opened up a 20m break on McCann and Thompson and was running away with the

race. In the 7th and 8th kms Johnson continued to extend her lead, pushing it out to 12 seconds and passing through 8km in 26.11. Thompson and McCann continued to work together to try and bridge the gap to Johnson, but she continued to put distance between herself and the chasers.

Johnson closed out the last km in very strong 3.07, winning in 32.33 and showing that she is ready to take on England's world marathon record holder Paula Radcliffe and a host of Kenyans at the Commonwealth Games.

McCann took 2nd place back from Thompson by just two seconds, 33.01 to 33.03, and all three placegetters recorded times that were inside the Commonwealth Games B qualifying standard.

### RESULTS

1. Benita Johnson	VIS	32.33
2. Kerryn McCann	NSWIS	33.01
3. Anna Thompson	VIS	33.03
4. Haley McGregor	VIS	33.51
5. Susan Michelsson	VIC	34.19
6. Kate Smyth	VIC	34.20
7. Jessica Ruthe	NZL	34.34
8. Lauren Shelley	WA	35.07
9. Melinda Vernon	NSW	36.01
10. Lisa Dick	VIC	38.40



Absolute delight, a national 800m championship for Suzy Walsham