



## Athletics Australia

**The Melbourne Commonwealth Games brought plenty of highlights for Australian distance running and the outstanding performances have continued since the track was ripped up from the MCG**

### Beijing Ekiden Road Relay

Australian men's and women's teams competed in the Beijing Ekiden Relay in April, with several potential 2008 Olympians on the trip. This was not only a great competition in itself, but was a wonderful familiarisation opportunity.

The Australian women's team placed third in the event, with Anna Thompson running the fastest time on her 10km leg, while the men's team placed a credible fourth.

### Athletics Australia middle distance development tour

In April and May Athletics Australia conducted a development tour of the USA for six outstanding male middle distance prospects. Athletes were based and trained out of Eugene, Oregon and competed in a series of competitions in California and Oregon.

Highlights of the tour included Andrew Krumins 800m personal best of 1.47.16, taking him to the top of the Australian 800m rankings for 2006, and Collis Birmingham confirming he is a rising star of Australian distance running in taking third place in the 5000m at the Cardinal Meet at Stanford University in 13.38.93. Birmingham backed this result up with a sub four-minute mile one week later.

### J and J lead the way - Jamieson and Johnson

After a fine silver medal at the Commonwealth Games, Sarah Jamieson has continued her brilliant



*Above: Craig Mottram storming to victory in the New York Healthy Kidney 10km. Image by Victor Sailer.*

season with a very strong race series in the USA. Jamieson won the Adidas Invitational in California and the Reebok Invitational in New York, plus took fourth place in the Pre Meet in Oregon. Her time in Oregon of 4.03.13 was a personal best and sees her closing on Marg Crowley's 10 year old Australian Record of 4.01.34.

Benita Johnson's fourth placing in both the long and short course at the World Cross Country Championships confirmed her status as one of the world's best distance runners. Since then she has made a very significant impact on the USA road running circuit, finishing amongst the top few places in major races, including winning the Freihoffer's 5km in Albany, NY and in doing so defeating arguably the best middle distance road runner in the world, Lorna Kiplagat. Johnson's diversity the past few months include an Australian 10km road record of 31.17 in Manchester and running her 2nd fastest ever 1500m time of 4.07.90.

### Other outstanding performances

Craig Mottram continued his undefeated 10km road running streak in winning the Healthy Kidney 10km in Central Park New York, just missing the fastest 10km time ever run through that famous location.

Donna McFarlane's fantastic 2006 continued with a very strong second place in the steeplechase at the Qatar Grand Prix.

Victoria Mitchell confirmed Australia is one of the leading nations at women's steeplechase by taking victory in that event at the Josef Odlozil Memorial meeting in Prague.

Anna Thompson's fine 10km road performance in Beijing was followed up with an impressive victory in the Victorian 10km road titles. Thompson ran 32.43 to win from Lisa-Jane Weightman, whose 33.15 was some what of a breakthrough performance. Lee Troop returned from injury to take the men's title as he prepares for the upcoming Gold Coast Airport Marathon (which doubles as the Australian Marathon Championship). **RAYL**