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## World Championship hopes submerged

By Damian Shutie

***Swimming and hockey are sports familiar to most of us, but combine the two into one game and you are likely to be scratching your head in confusion.***

But, underwater hockey is on the rise and, with Australia defending the world title in the unique sport, why wouldn't it be?

Last month, seven Victorians packed their snorkels, flippers and togs and travelled to New Zealand to represent Australia at the 2004 CMAS World Underwater Hockey Championships in Christchurch.

Australia competed in the men's elite, women's elite, masters men, masters women and mixed junior events.

Although underwater hockey is not your everyday sport, it is played by everyday people with a competitive spirit and a snorkel.

Underwater hockey was invented by the British Navy in the 1950s to keep divers fit and improve underwater movement and efficiency.

And, it seems underwater hockey is yet another game Britain has invented, but Australia has mastered.

The sport is played in a 15 x 25m pool ranging from 1.8m to three metres in depth.

A goal is scored when the 1.5kg puck is pushed into the back of the opposition's goal-tray using a 30cm wooden bat.

The team with the most goals, at the end of two 15-minute halves, is the winner.

Seven Victorians represented Australia: Tania McLeish (vice-captain), Belinda Watts, Kirsteen Reid and Alex Doughty in the women's elite, Hamish Ride in the men's elite, Lucero Perdomo in the masters women's and Nina Barry-Macaulay in the juniors.

Prior to departing Alex Doughty of Kew was excited but a little stressed about the coming competition.

"We take (the World Championships) really seriously and we are training everyday," she said.

"It gets pretty stressful at times because we have to pay the travel costs and we don't have any sponsors."

Being an amateur sport means the players must meet the costs associated with travel, equipment and training.

But, like all amateur sports, that is likely to change as the sport's popularity grows which, according to the statistics, may not be so long a wait.

It is estimated the sport is played in more than 40 countries and the CMAS World Championships increase in size each year.

Five nations were represented in 1980 and that had increased to 13 countries with 36 teams in 2002.

Australia will enter this year's tournament as favourites but, according to Doughty, the Aussies are keeping their feet, or rather flippers, grounded.

"We are the defending champs after winning in Canada. But we are not cocky at all about winning. It's just so close, particularly in the women's event," she said.

The toughest competition was expected to come from host nation New Zealand, while Canada, USA, South Africa, France, Great Britain and the Netherlands were also likely to be competitive.

*continued on page 2*

*live. breathe*

underwater hockey

*coming soon*

# Socialites Anonymous

We are calling for all party-people interested in forming the VUHC Events sub-committee.

Should you choose to take on the challenge you will be asked to organise outrageous and hideously exciting events for underwater hockey players for the next year.

All interested socialites can contact the committee at: [committee@vuhc.org.au](mailto:committee@vuhc.org.au), or telephone (03) 9815 1203

## Victorian State Mens Team Selections

On July 6 it was announced that the Victorian Mens State Team Selections will be held on Sunday 1 August, commencing at 7pm at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre. For further information regarding the National Championships (to be held from December 27 to December 31, 2004), please contact the state team manager at [s3014049@student.rmit.edu.au](mailto:s3014049@student.rmit.edu.au)

We also called for nominations for selectors for the Victorian Mens State Team. All applications should be received by Sunday 18 July (Please note that selectors must be available to attend all selection trial dates). Please email applications to [committee@vuhc.org.au](mailto:committee@vuhc.org.au), or hand to your committee members at the pool.

## SCOREBOARD

2004 Winter Pennant

Round 1

Tuesday June 22

HOME – MONASH

Monash vs Hawthorn, 9 – 2;

Monash vs South Yarra, 4 – 4;

Round 2

Wednesday June 29

HOME – SOUTH YARRA

South Yarra vs Hawthorn, 4 – 4;

South Yarra vs Monash, 7 – 1;

Round 3

Sunday July 11

HOME – HAWTHORN

Hawthorn vs South Yarra,;

Hawthorn vs Monash

Round 4

Tuesday July 13

HOME – MONASH

Monash vs South Yarra, 6-2;

Monash vs Hawthorn, 6-0.

## World Championship hopes submerged

*continued from front page*

The competition was held at Australasia's largest aquatic facility, QE2 Park, and had a round robin format with teams playing up to two games-a-day.

According to Doughty, the importance of the surface in underwater hockey is similar to the pitch's condition in cricket.

But, unlike cricket, underwater hockey does not have a sledging problem, bar the occasional hand gesture.

The sport is similar to both field and ice-hockey in its strategies, although more compact than the land and ice version of the game.

An underwater hockey team consists of six players in the water with up-to four substitutes out of the pool who cheer with the spectators until they are required to get wet.

Ordinarily, spectators would see very little from the stand as all the action is under the surface of the water.

But, thanks to technology, spectators are brought right into the underwater action by two waterproof cameras, situated at each end, that transmit onto a big screen TV.

"It's really good. But you have to be careful you don't put your bum in the way of the camera," Doughty quipped.

Some pools, such as the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre, have an underwater viewing chamber so games can be watched up close and personal.

"It would be a dream to have a pool completely surrounded by an underwater viewing arena," Doughty said.

But she is not holding her breath.



## Girls Sport Victoria Expo

### October 11 – 13, 2004

Girls Sport Victoria in partnership with the YMCA have been preparing to once again stage the Girls Sport Victoria Expo which will be held during Health and Physical Education Week, October 11 – 13, 2004.

Girls Sport Victoria have developed a comprehensive program package that will be offered at three metropolitan locations, which target 24 independent girls' schools.

Each venue will cater for approximately 400, year 7 students. Students will be given the opportunity to participate in a range of sport and recreational activities in a half-day active participation format.

The aim of the Girls Sport Victoria Expo is to create a relationship between schools and local and state sporting associations in the surrounding community. The day's activities will allow students to participate in three activities conducted by sports development officers or officials from local clubs.

State Sporting Associations will be given the opportunity to:

- Liaise with the Heads of Sport from participating independent schools and provide promotional material and information on their sport.
- Create a link to a priority target market – (Young Girls)
- Network with 24 independent Schools
- Participate in three metropolitan locations (Ashburton, Ascotvale & Hawthorn)

**The Victorian Underwater Hockey Commission will be contributing to the expo on October 11 at Ashburton, and October 13 at Hawthorn. We are seeking female players who may be interested in assisting in the coaching and running of the activities. This will be a great way for the sport to develop new interest from young girls and begin to develop the sport for women.**

*Interested players, or for more information please contact Alex Doughty on (03) 9815 1203, or email s3014049@student.rmit.edu.au.*

## Level 1 & 2 Referee Course

The VUHC is calling for players interested in completing a Level 1 Refereeing Certificate. This will be a mandatory requirement for all state team players, and a strong recommendation for all players of the pennant competition.

As we will need to fly Simon Talbot (UHA Chief Referee) from Tasmania to conduct the course we will need players to indicate their interest as soon as possible. Players wishing to complete their Level 2 certificate should also nominate their interest.

It is expected that the course will be conducted on a Sunday afternoon before the beginning of the Spring Pennant.

Please email the committee at [committee@vuhc.org.au](mailto:committee@vuhc.org.au) or call (03) 9815 1203

## Strategy & Game Play Seminar Series

With the development of the rostered matches, an idea arose to provide the opportunity for less experienced players to learn more about the positioning, strategies and game play of the sport.

This idea has developed into a seminar series, which will be conducted by a number of Victoria's top players over the course of the year.

The seminars will run in conjunction with the rostered matches, beginning on August 1 at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre with an introductory session.

**Seminar One**  
**6:00pm, August 1, MSAC**

## *The Worlds: Through the eyes of Ms Oooh-tee*

***I found that when I stepped on the fertile, sheep-grazing soil of New Zealand, I was no longer a struggling university student, instead a sultry and seductive sex kitten known as Ms Ooohtee! However, I must thank the spelling inability of CMAS for the transformation into my alter ego.***

Well my darlings, the Worlds was certainly a continental buffet of deliciously tantalising, firm and often quite “ripped” male bodies. But of course that didn’t distract me and the rest of my team mates from the reasons we were there in the first place. Oh, except for the time we were on the pool deck, sorry, our jaws were on the pool deck, as the French Men’s team were stretching before their game. Did I forget to mention they were the white team, and of course darling, white and water are quite a fashion exposé! For a comprehensive demonstration of their unfathomably large bathers worn to comfortably accommodate their “*bag of tricks*”, I strongly recommend you contact Ms Kirsteen Reid; the accuracy of her account is nothing short of breathtaking!

The girls were quite clearly the most in touch with fashion, although our manager was like a ball and chain, forcing us to conform to the drab and frumpy rags of a polar-fleece and “zip-off” pants at the opening ceremony. Pah-lease! Someone call the fashion police! First lesson in fashion – multi-functionality and fashion don’t mix, just pack your entire wardrobe! Thank God we were in another country, and that country was New Zealand! I barely coped with the humiliation, but my heart went out to Tania, it was clearly quite traumatic for the little poppet.

The girls in the team blended like a strawberry daiquiri, ignoring the fact that in one room were the Tasmanian’s, in the other, the rest. We all got along well, and everyone commented on the dynamics of the team being so positive. Our meetings were being steered by the foul humour of Kirsteen, and even more foul scents of Tina on a concoction of Blackmores vitamins and baked beans – ever so unlady-like! However these meetings tended to be quite productive, and even more informative. I learned all about the sexual relationships and encounters between existing and past members of the Australian men’s team, as well as all about our coach’s sex life. You really couldn’t distinguish the talk of hockey between the talk of sex – it’s all about the positioning, going-down, driving forward and how well your back-line swings.

The accommodation was quaint, and sometimes quite cosy. Particularly in our coach’s room where the four beds were lined up in a row where Alli, Jas, Marie and Alan slept each night. We didn’t delve into what went on behind closed doors, but the cleaning lady did make a quick exit one afternoon in a pale and pastey sweat. The poor darling!

At the accommodation it became clear the metrosexuality of some of the members of the mens team. Pink thongs were now a fashion statement that had developed a following distinguished only by their meeting quarters at *The Pink Thong Love Den*. Although this fashion statement would not have been condoned by the Fab Five, the captain of the mens team held a soft spot for the thongs which he acquired from a bargain bin down at the local Westfield shopping centre.

By the way, the Fab Five were not of the queer-eye variety, at all. Miss Tania McLeish took care of fashion, Ms Belinda Watts for grooming, Miss Phoebe Stewart for culture, Ms Tina Donovan for food (well at least the supplementing of food), and I, Ms *Oooh-tee*, took care of any interior design matters that arose.

Other than playing a lot of hockey we did have the opportunity to explore Christchurch. Tania, Belinda and I grabbed that opportunity on our day off with an adventure to Christchurch’s sewage depot. Although fascinating and with an intriguing and distinct scent, we made our visit brief and carried on to our originally intended destination – next door at the cultural centre. That evening we hosted a Maori Cultural Extravaganza with the Great Britain and US teams, unfortunately the French men were forbidden to attend, as their coach feared they would lose their focus – I’m sure they wouldn’t have lost their focus at all, merely readjusted it!

Through reading this highly accurate documentation of my experience of the worlds you may think that we didn’t even dip a toe in the pool. So wrong, so wrong an assumption! My darlings, I just cannot bare to reflect on our dismal failure to capture any golden bling-bling. Don’t worry, we will all be fine. We have agreed to avenge this bitter loss at the 2006 Worlds Championships in Sheffield, where I’m sure the continental buffets of bods will be extended, rather like that of the seafood variety - oh yummy!