

Special Olympics New Zealand

2011 World Summer Game

Newsletter update April



Meet Rob—our Head of Delegation

The man leading our delegation to Athens is an expert in team management and well used to fighting fires—both metaphorically and literally.

His role outside of Special Olympics New Zealand is Senior Station Officer at Dunedin's Willowbank Fire Station. It's fair to say that his experience in working with the unexpected, keeping a cool head in a crisis and functioning on little sleep puts him in good stead for the Head of Delegation role.

"From speaking with the Head of Delegation for the last World Winter Games I understand if you get five hours' sleep a night, it's a good night," jokes Rob.

While the athletes and coaches are busy training, Rob and Event Manager Sue Kysow are putting in as much time as possible to

get everything prepared for the major trip ahead of them.

"Sue is looking after the operational side of things. My job will be to make things as easy as possible for the athletes and everyone going. We had a great training camp last year, which went a long way to build rapport as a team. Everyone knows what they want and is really motivated; that makes it a lot easier," he says.

"My role will really step up a gear once we take off and of course in Athens; I fully expect to be very busy there!"

Rob has an idea of what's in store having travelled to the 2007 World Summer Games in Shanghai, China, with the basketball team (who went on to win gold) and leading the Otago delegation to the last National Summer Games.

Last year he visited Athens as part of the Head of Delegation Conference and learnt where the athletes will be competing and the realities of getting to Greece.

"The travel is going to be hard, especially moving as a group. It took me 37 hours to get there with delays last time. The heat is another challenge. We're going from the dead of winter to 35°C and dehydration is a real issue. So we are building in contingency plans for all situations," he says.

"Above all we're going to have a great time. I'm quite enjoying the ride already." ■



Helen Johnson

One of the most challenging and exciting roles within the Athens delegation is that of 'Additional Staff'.

"You don't necessarily know what you're going to be doing [on any given day]. You go where you're needed," says Helen Johnson (Special Olympics Manawatu) who is travelling to Athens in this role alongside Peter Makara (Special Olympics Waikato).

At the last World Summer Games in Shanghai, Helen spent her entire time with the athletics team as an Assistant Coach. This time she's picking she'll be dividing her time between athletics and swimming and will also be responsible for a small group of the athletes for the duration of the trip.

"You need to be sure that the athletes don't have any issues; that they have contact with home, that their bags are packed, shopping done and that they know when their training sessions are. A lot of it is organising and reassurance. For example, when they're competing they need to know how to find you within a stand of 80,000 people," says Helen.

"What I'm looking forward to most is seeing the athletes achieve at a different level. Most will only be starting to realise that all the extra training they have been doing over the last year or more will enable them to reach their top performance; the level they need to be at to get medals at the World Games. Seeing these personal achievements and experiencing the tears of joy are the highlights of the trip." ■

Our support team

Taking a large group overseas for a month is no mean feat. The Special Olympics New Zealand delegation is fortunate to be supported by fantastic team of volunteers who will travel with the athletes and coaches and ensure everything goes according to plan. They include:

Operations support: Shayne Crabtree (Assistant Head of Delegation), Paul Johns (Team Doctor), Helen Johnson (Additional Staff), Peter Makara (Additional Staff).

Sports Officials: Ross Bragg (Aquatics), Dave Beattie (Aquatics), Bruce Martin (Basketball).

Technical Delegates: Mike Ryan (Bocce), Roslein Wilkes (Assistant Technical Delegate, Equestrian).

Healthy Athletes Programme Clinicians: Rebekah Hanna (Opening Eyes programme), Jeanine Doherty (Healthy Hearing programme), Sandra Knight (Healthy Hearing programme).

Special Olympics Global Scholar: Brigit Mirfin-Veitch (Donald Beasley Institute).

Communications: Robert Tighe (Journalist), Penny Towns (Photographer).

See www.specialolympics.org.nz/worldsummergames for a full list.

Bowl-o-rama

It has been a busy six months for Special Olympics New Zealand's bowling team. Since their selection last year, the seven athletes have been fundraising furiously and stepping up their training sessions.

Special Olympics Rotorua held a special Greek-themed event in March for Adrian Rowe and non-travelling reserve Alan Coleman.

Meanwhile, community newspaper *Rodney Times* gave Anna-Marie Stevens (Special Olympics Waitakere) accolades in an article spurring donations into her special "Get Anna to Greece" bank account.

"We've finalised the fundraising and are now sorting out spending money," she says. "It's been a bit hard fitting in extra training as I have just started a new job but I go down to my local bowling alley every weekend. I've been going there for seven years now."

Anna-Marie recently headed down to Hawke's Bay to train with the rest of the team and Head Coach Ian Baldwin (Special Olympics Hawke's Bay).



Anna-Marie Stevens

Ian is a veteran of the World Summer Games having also coached teams at the 2007 Shanghai, China, and 1995 Connecticut, USA World Games.

He has made special trips to Auckland, New Plymouth, Palmerston North and Rotorua to ensure each team member is in the best shape for June's competition.

"It's all good fun but the World Games are quite demanding. The athletes can get very tired as they are long days," says Ian.

"Where possible, I'm giving them one-on-one training. They all work well as a team, which is very important. We have a good mix." ■

New horses for World Games courses

Attending the World Summer Games is a "dream come true" for Special Olympics Waikato's Devon Tretheway-Koppers.

Based in Te Aroha, the equestrian extraordinaire has been training six times a week in preparation for the competitions ahead including dressage, trail and equitation (the study and practice of riding and horsemanship).

"I'm basically out there all the time training," she says.

She has also been busy fundraising for her trip coordinating raffles and donations, liaising with local media and speaking to community groups.

Part of her preparation has also involved riding different horses as she will be supplied with new horses in Greece for training and competitions.

"I'm a bit nervous. I have my own two horses that I'm very used to. But I've been helping out at my local Riding for the Disabled to warm up their horses, which has given me a chance to get used to



Poised and ready: Tom Sutton, Amy Batchelor and Devon Tretheway-Koppers.

other horses. They are all so different and have very individual personalities."

This month she will attend a special training session in Blenheim with Head Coach Amanda Bashford and non-travelling reserve Amy Batchelor (Special Olympics Canterbury). She will have a further opportunity to

train with fellow athlete Tom Sutton (Special Olympics Canterbury) once in Greece at the riding schools in Loutraki and Rhodes.

"This is my first trip overseas and I'm really excited. I'm looking forward to seeing my dream come true and representing my country overseas," she says. ■

